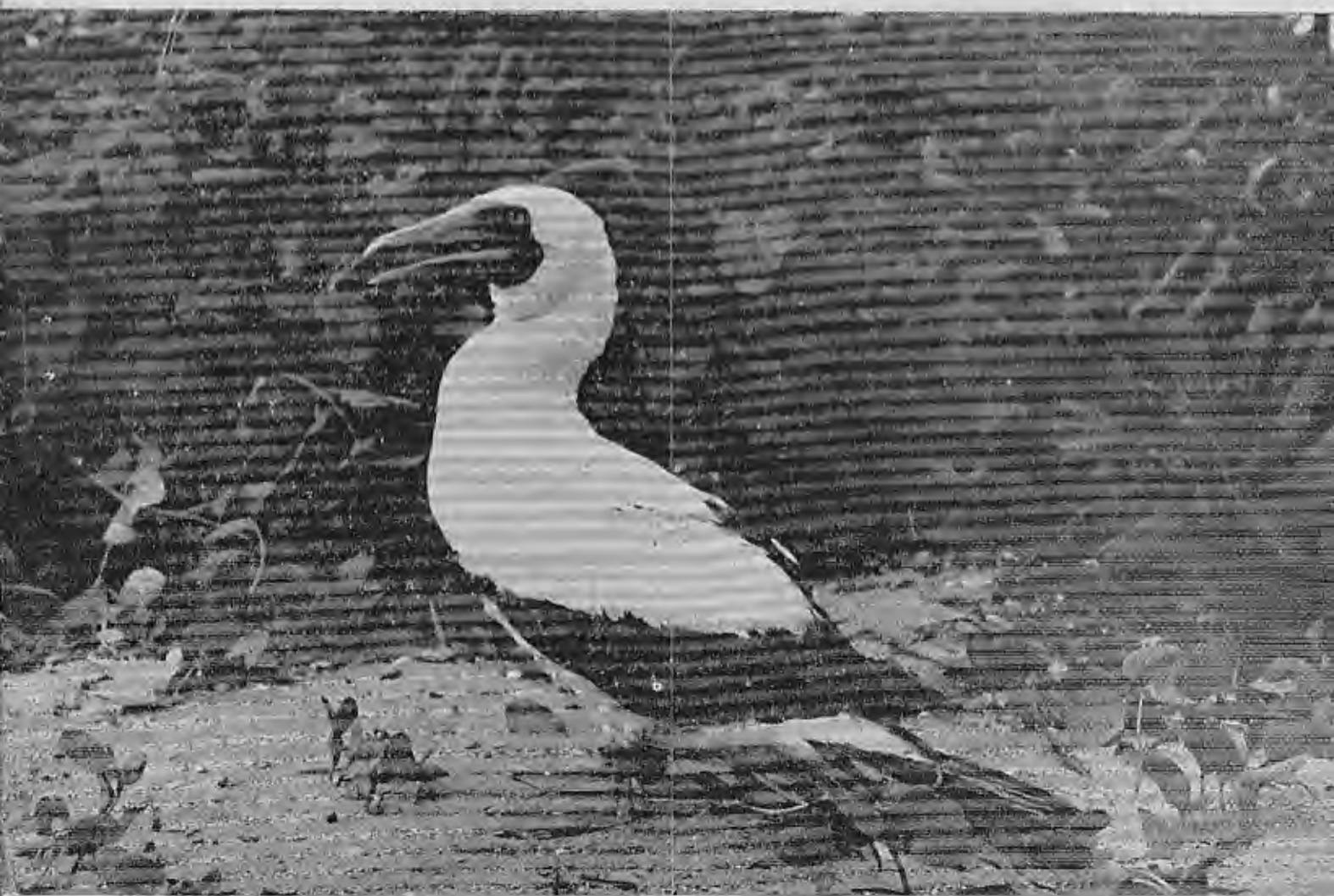


# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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VOL. XXVI NO. 1 & 2 JAN. - FEB. 1986



ನವೆಂಬರ್ 1, 1985 - ರಾಜ್ಯೋತ್ಸವ ಆಚರಣೆ

ಅರ್ಥಪೂರ್ಣ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳ ಸ್ಮರಣೆ

ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು ಪೂರೈಕೆ:

ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳಿಗೆ ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು ಸರಬರಾಜಿನಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ ಪ್ರಥಮ ಸ್ಥಾನ. ಕಳೆದೇಡು ವರ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮೂವತ್ತು ಸಾವಿರ ಬಾವಿಗಳನ್ನು ತೋಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಈಗ ಒಟ್ಟು 83,624 ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರಿನ ಬಾವಿಗಳಿವೆ.

ಕಡಿಮೆ ಬೆಲೆಗೆ ಆಹಾರ ಧಾನ್ಯ:

ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಆದಾಯ 3,500 ರೂ.ಗಳಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಇರುವ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಪ್ರದೇಶದ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ದುರ್ಬಲ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳಿಗೆ ತಲಾ ಕೆ.ಜಿ.ಗೆ ಅಕ್ಕಿಯನ್ನು 2 ರೂ., ರಾಗಿ ಮತ್ತು ಗೋಧಿಯನ್ನು 1.25 ರೂ. ಮತ್ತು ಜೋಳವನ್ನು 1.50 ರೂ.ಗೆ ಇಂದಿನಿಂದ ಕೊಡಲಾಗುವುದು.

ಜನತಾ ಸೀರೆ ಮತ್ತು ಪಂಚೆ:

ಅಕ್ಟೋಬರ್ 2, 1985—ಗಾಂಧಿ ಜಯಂತಿ ದಿನದಿಂದ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ವರಮಾನ 3,500 ರೂ.ಗಳಿಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಇರುವ ದುರ್ಬಲ ವರ್ಗದ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳಿಗೆ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಗತ್ಯ ಬಟ್ಟೆ ಪೂರೈಕೆ. ಒಂದು ಪಂಚೆ ಮತ್ತು ಪರ್ಟ್ ಬಟ್ಟೆಗೆ 15 ರೂ. ಮತ್ತು ಒಂದು ಸೀರೆ ಮತ್ತು ಕುಪ್ಪಸ ಬಟ್ಟೆಗೆ 12.50 ರೂ.ನಂತೆ ನೀಡಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಗುರುತಿಸಲಾಗಿರುವ ಇಂಥ 24 ಲಕ್ಷ ದುರ್ಬಲ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳು ಕಡಿಮೆ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಆಹಾರ ಧಾನ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ಬಟ್ಟೆ ಯೋಜನೆಯು ಪ್ರಯೋಜನ ಪಡೆಯಲಿವೆ.

ತಾಳಿಯಭಾಗ್ಯ:

ದೊಡ್ಡದೊಡ್ಡ ಇಳಿಸುವ ಮತ್ತು ಸಾಮೂಹಿಕ ವಿವಾಹ ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹಿಸುವ ಅಪೂರ್ಣ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಯು ಪ್ರತಿ ವಧುವಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಗ್ರಾಂ ಚಿನ್ನದ ತಾಳಿ, ಒಂದು ಜೊತೆ ಸೀರೆ ಮತ್ತು ರವಿಕೆ ಒಂದು ಜೊತೆ ಪಂಚೆಯನ್ನು ಉಚಿತವಾಗಿ ಹಂಚಲಾಗುವುದು.

ಹೆರಿಗೆ ಭತ್ಯೆ:

ಬೇಸಾಯ ಕೂಲಿಕಾರ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಹೆರಿಗೆಯ ಹತ್ತಿರ ಕಾಲದಲ್ಲಿ 300 ರೂ. ಭತ್ಯೆ ಕೊಡಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಈಗಾಗಲೇ 66,000 ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಎರಡು ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ನಷ್ಟು ನೆರವು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಶಾಲಾ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಉಚಿತ ಪಠ್ಯಪುಸ್ತಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮವಸ್ತ್ರ:

ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಶಾಲಾ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಉಚಿತ ಪಠ್ಯಪುಸ್ತಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮವಸ್ತ್ರ ಹಂಚುವ ಕ್ರಾಂತಿಕಾರಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿದೆ.

ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ, ಕಾರ್ಪೊರೇಷನ್ ಹಾಗೂ ಧನಸಹಾಯ ಪಡೆದ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ವಿದ್ಯಾಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮತ್ತು 2ನೇ ತರಗತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಓದುವ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಎರಡು ಜೊತೆ ಉಚಿತ ಸಮವಸ್ತ್ರ ನೀಡಲಾಗುವುದು. ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಜಾತಿ ಮತ್ತು ವರ್ಗದ ಹೆಣ್ಣು ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ 3ರಿಂದ 7ನೇ ತರಗತಿಯವರೆಗೂ ಈ ಅನುಕೂಲವನ್ನು ವಿಸ್ತರಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ, ಕಾರ್ಪೊರೇಷನ್ ಮತ್ತು ಧನಸಹಾಯ ಪಡೆದ ವಿದ್ಯಾಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 1ರಿಂದ 7ನೇ ತರಗತಿಯವರೆಗೆ ಓದುತ್ತಿರುವ ಸುಮಾರು 53 ಲಕ್ಷ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಸುಮಾರು 16 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ವೆಚ್ಚದಲ್ಲಿ ಉಚಿತ ಸಮವಸ್ತ್ರ ಮತ್ತು ಪಠ್ಯ ಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳನ್ನು ಹಂಚಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ವೃದ್ಧಾಪ್ಯವೇತನ:

ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಸುಮಾರು 5 ಲಕ್ಷಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ನಿರಾಧಾರ ವೃದ್ಧರಿಗೆ ಮಾಸಿಕ 50 ರೂ.ನಂತೆ ವೃದ್ಧಾಪ್ಯವೇತನ ನೀಡಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಕಳೆದೇಡು ವರ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 55.6 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ. ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಗೆ ವೆಚ್ಚವಾಗಿದೆ.

ವಿಧವೆಯರಿಗೆ ಮಾಸಾಶನ:

ನಿಸಹಾಯಕ ವಿಧವೆಯರಿಗೆ ತಿಂಗಳಿಗೆ 50 ರೂ.ನಂತೆ ಮಾಸಾಶನ ನೀಡಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ವರಮಾನ 1500 ರೂ.ಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಇರುವ ಒಂದೂವರೆ ಲಕ್ಷ ನಿರ್ಗತಿಕ ವಿಧವೆಯರಿಗೆ ಈ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ದೊರೆತಿದೆ.

ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಶಾಸನ:

ಈ ಶಾಸನದಿಂದ ಜನತೆಯ ಜತೆ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ಹಂಚಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವ, ಜನತಂತ್ರಕ್ಕೆ ನಿಜವಾದ ಅರ್ಥ, ಶಕ್ತಿ ಕೊಡುವ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣದ ಮಹಾ ಪ್ರಯೋಗ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದಲ್ಲಿ ಆರಂಭ. ಇದು ಜನರಲ್ಲಿ ಉದ್ಯಮ ಶೀಲ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ವಾವಲಂಬನೆಯ ಮನೋಭಾವ ಮಾಡಿ ಆಡಳಿತ ಮತ್ತು ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನೇರವಾಗಿ ಪಾಲ್ಗೊಳ್ಳಲು ಪ್ರಾರಂಭವಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಕನ್ನಡ ಭಾಷಾ ವರ್ಷ:

ಇಂದಿನಿಂದ ಕನ್ನಡ ಆಡಳಿತ ಭಾಷೆ ವರ್ಷದ ಆಚರಣೆ; ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಹಂತಗಳ ಆಡಳಿತದಲ್ಲಿ ಕನ್ನಡದ ವಿಜೃಂಭಣೆ.

ಜನಸಾಮಾನ್ಯರ ನಿತ್ಯ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಪರಿಣಾಮಕಾರಿ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಕೊಟ್ಟ ಭರವಸೆಗಳ ಈಡೇರಿಕೆ — ಕ್ಷೇಮಾಭ್ಯುದಯ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಿಗೊಂದು ಹೊಸ ಆಯಾಮ.

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಾರ್ತೆ

NEWSLETTERS  
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXVI

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January-February '86

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### Editorial

Jardons Courser rediscovered: It is wonderful news that this bird which has been referred to as extinct in so many ornithological congresses since the beginning of this century has now been rediscovered. I am copying the press release from the Bombay Natural History Society. Readers will remember the picture of this bird on the cover of our Newsletter in 1982. There have indeed been quite a few cases of birds and animals given up as lost, which have reappeared as a result of later surveys. I will pursue this subject later on.

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World Bird Watch by the International Council for Bird Preservation: The International Council for Bird Preservation has started to produce 'World Bird Watch', and I am sure some of our readers would like to subscribe. Write to Christoph Imboden, Director, I.C.B.P., 219C Huntington Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, England.

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Asian Wetlands Inventory: Under the joint auspices of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, International Council for Bird Preservation and International Waterfowl Research Bureau it has been decided to produce an 'Inventory of Wetlands' in Southern and Eastern Asia taking in all countries from Pakistan, India, China, Japan, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. "The principle objective of the inventory is to present as comprehensive a review as possible of our knowledge to the importance of wetlands in Asia". I am sure some of our readers would like to play a part in supplying information to the organisers. Please see the data sheet elsewhere in this Newsletter and fill-up as many as you can. If some of the enquiries appear irrelevant or too difficult to respond to just drop them. Do the best that you can in the interest of conserving water and waterfowl.

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Bird Call - A Newsletter for Oriental Birdwatchers: Dr. Kumar Ghorpade (P.O. Box 2564, 123 Brigade Road, Bangalore 560025) is working on the inaugural issue of a new Newsletter for Birdwatchers in the Oriental Region. It will attempt



to present information on birds (and birdwatchers) of South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific to anyone desirous of acquiring the same.

An amount of Rs.12/- (for the first 6 issues) is solicited from individuals in India (US dollars 2.00 or equivalent from foreign subscribers) in advance. Institutions in India need pay Rs.30/- each (foreign US dollars 3.00 or equivalent). Articles, letters, notes, news, book reviews, requests, literature, etc., are welcome for inclusion. Though beginners and "armchair birdwatchers" will also be encouraged, this newsletter hopes to cater to the more serious and enthusiastic birders with the objective of improving standards of Oriental Ornithology and also to function as an "information box".

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Jerdon's Courser Rediscovered; Bombay Natural History Society; Press Release; The rarest bird of India - Jerdon's Courser - is rediscovered by the Bombay Natural History Society after 85 years. This beautiful 'double - necklaced' bird was last sighted in Andhra Pradesh (Pennar Valley) in 1900. Since then this bird had eluded the eyes of even the keenest of Ornithologists for all these years in spite of intensive search in likely areas.

When all attempts to find this rare bird through the decades drew a blank the Bombay Natural History Society decided to make a renewed attempt under one of its current ecological research projects known as the Endangered Species Project for which Dr.Salim Ali is the Principal Investigator and Mr.J.C.Daniel the Co-Investigator. This research project was launched in 1981 by the Bombay Natural History Society in collaboration with the Department of Environment (GOI) and the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

The task of searching this elusive bird was assigned to Mr.Bharat Bhushan, M.Sc., a young scientist of the BNHS. He spent several months of seemingly hopeless search.

As a part of this search, handbills containing a painting of the Courser as well as a description of where to look for it was distributed to people in the entire original range of distribution of this bird, requesting information. Even awards were promised to those who can locate the bird or catch one alive.

At last one trapper near Cuddappah, Andhra Pradesh, managed to catch a bird on 14 January in a trap. It unfortunately died of shock even before Dr. Salim Ali accompanied by Mr. J. C. Daniel and Mr. P. B. Shekar reached the site. The bird was then skinned and stuffed into a scientific specimen by Mr. P. B. Shekar. It is a pity that the bird died, but the evidence that this species occurs in small numbers in this area has now helped the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department to give this rare species all the protection it deserves.

The Chief Wildlife Warden, Mr. Pushp Kumar, was overjoyed to locate the bird to his territory and has promised to spare no pains to declare the area a sanctum sanctorum for this rarest of Indian birds so that it may have a safe place to survive for posterity.

The Jardon's Courser, also known as double-banded courser appears to be crepuscular or nocturnal and is an extremely shy bird. It is slightly larger than a myna, but taller. It appears to be an insect-eating bird. It was first discovered in 1848.

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World Bird Watch by the International Council for Bird Preservation: World circulation of World Birdwatch has considerably increased during the last twelve months, too. Again, I find this most gratifying, and ICBP is certainly the stronger for gaining a flourishing readership.

But printing and postage cost money. Better quality and a larger international circulation have also increased our publication expenses. Many representatives of member organisations, especially those in fairly affluent countries, have told me that they would be happy to pay a modest annual subscription to help cover our costs, as our generous Contributing Members already do. They say World Birdwatch is worth paying for.

But not all our readers could afford this. I am thinking especially of hard-pressed conservationists in the Third World where the need for conservation news is perhaps greatest of all. Sharing resources between developed and developing countries is one of ICBP's fundamental goals.

So I am asking every World Birdwatch reader to consider making a voluntary contribution towards its publication and distribution. The average cost for mailing and printing comes to about £7 or \$ 10 per year (four issues). If you do not wish to make such a contribution, don't worry - you will still continue to receive World Birdwatch.

However, any contribution you can make - for your own copy and, if possible, on behalf of a reader in one of the developing countries as well - will help us keep publishing World Birdwatch.

Please respond generously if you can - and if you know people you think might like to receive a subscription, send us their names and addresses. Of course, if you would like to support the circulation of World Birdwatch in a particular country, you may indicate this in the return form below.

N.B. If you are already one of ICBP's Contributing Members, one of the benefits you are entitled to is a subscription to World Birdwatch. However, if you wish to make an additional contribution, it will be used to send our newsletter to one of ICBP's constituents in the Third World.

Name.....Address.....

Yes I am happy to help support World Birdwatch. I would like to make a contribution of \$/£.....by the following method:-

My cheque in £, drawn on UK bank, is enclosed

My cheque in \$, drawn on US bank, is enclosed

My contribution was made to the ICBP National Giro  
Ac/No. 2134624

An International Money Order in £ is enclosed

I have instructed my bank (name.....)  
to make direct debit transfer in £ to Barclays Bank,  
Banet Street, Cambridge, ICBP Ac/No. 10509574

For gifts over £7 or \$ 10 only:

I would like the balance to be used to send World Birdwatch to a reader in.....(name of country).

Please send World Birdwatch to: .....(name)  
.....(address)

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Asian Wetlands Inventory:

WETLAND DATA SHEET

1. Country:
2. Date:
3. Ref:
4. Name and address of compiler:
5. Name of wetland:
6. Geographical coordinates:
7. Location
8. Area:
9. Altitude:
10. Biogeographical Province:
11. Wetland type:
12. Description of site:
  - (a) water regime:
  - (b) Water depth:
  - (c) Salinity/acididity:
  - (d) fluctuations/permanence:
  - (e) Tidal variations:
  - (f) Climatic conditions:
13. Principle vegetation:
  - (a) aquatic vegetation:
  - (b) plant communities in adjacent areas:
14. Land tenures:
  - (a) of site:
  - (b) of surrounding areas:
15. Conservation measure taken:
  - (a) protected areas:
  - (b) other measures:



16. Conservation measures proposed:

- (a) existing proposals:      (b) new proposals:

17. Current land use:

- (a) at the wetland:      (b) in surrounding areas:

18. Possible changes in land use and proposed development projects:

- (a) at the wetland:      (b) in the water catchment area:

19. Disturbances and threats:

20. Conservation values:

- (a) Economic and social values:

- (b) Wildlife:

Fish:

Waterfowl:

Other fauna:

- (c) Special floral values:

21. Research and facilities:

22. References:

23. Outline map of site:

24. Criteria for inclusion:

Please return completed wetland data sheets to Derek A.Scott,  
IWRB, Slimbridge, Glos. GL2 7BX, England.

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World Heritage Decisions for 1985: The 9th Session of the World Heritage Committee met in Paris, 2-6 December, 1985. CNPPA (Commission On National Parks And Protected Areas) in its capacity as technical adviser on natural properties presented five sites for inclusion on the list. Accepted for inscription are: Keoladeo National Park/Kaziranga National Park/Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, all in India, Huascarán National Park, Peru, and the Goreme Valley in Turkey. The World Heritage List now includes 61 natural properties.

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Birds of Bhimanagar (Sholapur Dist., Maharashtra) Anil Mahabal, S.V.Mulay & R.Paliwal, Zoological Survey of India, W.R.S., Pune: During the faunistic survey of Sholapur District (Maharashtra) in August 1983, we camped at a place called Bhimanagar (Tq.Madha, Dist.Sholapur). This is a newly developed colony erected during the construction of the Ujeni Dam on the river Bhima and it covers an area of about 2 sq.km. In the area of Bhimanagar, there are residential quarters and office buildings around which there are gardens with ornamental plants, shrubs and trees. Besides, growth of trees and grasses can be observed on the open land. Agricultural crops like jowar and bajra were also growing on the irrigated tracts in this area.

The main trees here are Mangifera indica (Mango), Ficus sp. (Pimpal and Banyan), Delonix regia (Gulmohar), Polyalthia longifolia (Ashoka), Zizypus sp. (Bor), Syzygium cumini (Jambhul), Psidium guajava (Guava), Phyllanthus emblica (Alwa), Tamarindus indica (Tamarind), Azadiracta indica (Neem) and Acacia arabica (Babbul). Because of the vegetation and agricultural crops, the whole area appears green. Many

residential quarters, good vegetation and ample source of water nearby has turned this area into an optimal habitat for birds where they can feed during daytime and roost during nighttime.

During our halt over five days, we have made a systematic survey of birds of this area. Altogether we have observed the following 32 species of birds:-

Podiceps ruficollis (Little grebe), Bubulcus ibis (Cattle egret), Egretta garzetta (Little egret), Anas poecilorhyncha (Spotbill duck), Milvus migrans (Pariah kite), Amaurornis phoenicurus (Ceylonese whitebreasted waterhen), Vanellus indicus (Red wattled lapwing), Columba livia (Blue rock pigeon), Streptopelia decaocta (Indian ring dove), Psittacula krameri (Roseringed parakeet), Eudynamis scolopacea (Indian koel), Centropus sinensis (Crow pheasant), Athene brama (Spotted owl), Merops orientalis (Green bee-eater), Ammomanes phoenicurus (Rufoustailed finchlark), Hirundo daurica (Redrumped swallow), Oriolus oriolus (Golden oriole), Dicrurus adsimilis (Black drongo), Sturnus pagodarum (Brahminy myna), Acridotheres tristis (Indian myna), Corvus splendens (House crow), Corvus macrorhynchos (Jungle crow), Pycnonotus cafer (Redvented bulbul), Turdoides caudatus (Common babbler), Prinia socialis (Ashy wren warbler), Motacilla maderaspatensis (Large pied wagtail), Saxicoloides fulicata (Indian robin), Parus major (Gray tit), Nectarinia asiatica (Purple sunbird), Passer domesticus (House sparrow), Ploceus philippinus (Indian baya) and Lonchura malabarica (White throated munia).

Almost all these bird species were found to be roosting either solitarily or communally during night time. The approximate population of some communal roosting birds were as follows --- Indian Myna (150), House crow (80), Jungle crow (20), Blue rock pigeon (55), Pariah kite (15), Roseringed parakeet (100), House sparrow (125) and Redvented bulbul (20). All the above 32 bird species are resident and/or local migratory to some extent. The actual number could have been more as the winter migratory birds were still to arrive when we visited this area.

The Sholapur district lies in semi-arid tract of Deccan Plateau, has scarcity of water and there is no forest as such. When the whole of this district was surveyed for its avifauna, few localities having considerable number of bird species were observed. But Bhimanagar surpassed them all in concentration of birds and in the number of bird species observed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: The authors are thankful to the D-in-C, Zoological Survey of India, W.R.S., Pune for providing facilities.

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Occurrence of the pallid scops owl, *Otus brucei* (Hume) in Rajkot, Gujarat, by Taej Mundkur, Jr. Research Fellow, Dept. of Biosciences, Saurashtra Univ., Rajkot 360005, Gujarat:  
On 13 November 1984, at 5 am an owl flew into a lit room of the university hostel through a window that had been half covered by a red curtain. The frightened occupant waved his hands in an attempt to drive out the bird. But the owl was apparently scared, perhaps blinded by the light and so flew under the bed. I was then woken up and I caught the bird, a beautiful grey coloured tufted owl. It showed a great aversion for light and kept both eyes shut even when it was slightly provoked. When released into my room, it flew into a dark corner and settled down. If annoyed, it would puff itself up and stare, its yellow irises gleaming, and click its mandibles together making a sharp noise, also noted by Ali and Abdulali (1938). I have observed this behaviour in the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo bubo*) and spotted owl (*Athene brama*) as well.

The owl was identified as the Pallid Scops owl, *Otus brucei* (Hume), photographed, measured and released. The first primary (the innermost) was less than the sixth. Abdulali (1972) notes that this is the best character to differentiate *Otus brucei* from *O. scops*. The feathering of the tarsus extended to the base of the toes, a character that Ali and Ripley (1981) used in their key to differentiate the two species. Abdulali (1972), however, mentions that this difference does not exist in the specimens he checked, as both the species have feathers on tarsi extending to the base of the toes. The measurements of the collected bird were: wing - 160 mm; bill (from feathers) - 18 mm; tarsus - 35 mm; tail - 82 mm; weight - 80 g. These fit into the range of Baker's measurements (Ali and Ripley 1981). However, the weight of the bird was less than the one in the B.N.H.S. collection, that weighed 110g. when caught in December (Ali and Ripley 1981).

The bird according to Ripley (1982) is a "local migrant" in Gilgit, Punjab, Quetta dist. and Baluchistan from Chaman to Central Makranain Pakistan. The bird has been recorded in Sind (Eates 1938) who considers it rare. Dharma - Kumarsinhji (1955) considers the bird rare and a



straggler to Saurashtra and had collected specimens from Hathab, a coastal station near Bhavnagar. Abdulali (1972) refers to specimens from Poona, Thana and Ratnagiri, and Ali and Abdulali (1938) to a specimen from Bombay.

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The whitewinged black tern (Chlidonias leucopterus) in the coromandel coast, by R.Kannan, BNHS Ecological Research Station, Bharatpur 321001: The Indian handbook (compact edition, page 190) says that the whitewinged black tern is a rare winter visitor to Assam, East Pakistan, West Bengal and Ceylon". It also mentions that there are few scattered records of the occurrence of this species in the western-side of the country and also from the Andamans and Maldiva islands.

My first sighting of this lovely tern came on the evening of 10 April 1983, when I saw a solitary bird in summer dress flying low above the wader infested mudflats of the Adyar Estuary in Madras. The bird was readily distinguished by its black head and back, its prominent white upper forward wing surfaces, and pure white rump and tail (which was held slightly spread out in a triangular manner). There were a great number of whiskered and little terns flying about in the vicinity, thereby facilitating comparison.

A week later, on the 17th April, I saw about a hundred of these terns flying about in rabbles right around the estuary. They were mostly accompanied by other terns. Counting was difficult as the birds were numerous, and only a rough and conservative estimation could be made. Their numbers, however, declined rapidly in the days that followed. I kept seeing small numbers of 7 to 18 birds till the 29th April after which I never saw one again.

The whitewinged black tern is said to be very difficult to tell apart in winter plumage, when it closely resembles the familiar whiskered tern in morphology and behaviour. Thus it is very likely that I had been overlooking them in the winter months as whiskered terns. In summer, however, this must be one of the most easily identifiable of our terns in the field due to its contrasting and distinctive features.

The checklist of the birds of Pt. Calimere (R. Sugathan, JBNHS Vol. 79, No. 3, page 572) indicates that this tern is a 'common migrant' in that locality, which is about 300 kms. due south of the Madras coast. Therefore, as the Handbook speculates, it indeed appears that this tern may be a commoner and more widespread winter visitor than what the previous records suggest.

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Gap between courtship and mating among birds by Indra Kumar Sharma, Jodhpur 342020: The peacock devotes highest amount of energy in courtship among birds. It begins the dance of courtship early in February, whereas mating season is mainly in July-August. More over, a peacock hardly succeeds to mate with a peahen in a year. Whereas in the dance, he displays his tail feathers at least 700 times for about 3,500 minutes mating lasts for a few seconds only. This obviously suggests that there is a huge gap between the total energy expended to court a female and actual courtship energy leading to mating.

The great Indian bustard displays from February to October and for long periods in the morning and afternoon. But his mating with a hen takes place only once or twice a year for a few seconds only.

Among doves, the cock puffs and coos about 40 times a day, but hardly succeeds to mate more than once after two

or three days. It is surprising when wooed, the hen takes the posture for mating often, but the male is not yet sufficiently stimulated, hence forgoes the golden chance he has after expending so much energy. Almost similar is the case of the pigeon.

In the house sparrow, the cock dances excessively before the female, but succeeds to mate only when the nest is almost complete to enable the hen to lay her eggs. Mating is very often repeated without courtship.

In the rose-ringed parakeet, the cock chatters close to the hen, bobbing his head up and down to woo her during the mating season and the mating takes place after such courtship.

The reason for such a gap between courtship and mating is of ornithological and biological interest.

1. Courtship is longer and more elaborate among birds which have sexual segregation, or when the male is more colourful and, is involved in complicated courtship rituals. Hence he needs a longer practice, e.g., the peacock, great Indian bustard and the pigeon.

2. Such males are free from sharing parental care with the hens and find much free and spare energy to engage in wooing several females.

It would be interesting, if serious bird-watchers write about their observations on the phenomenon of gap between courtship and mating in birds.

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Birds in Dodda-Gubbi by Z.F.: When I stepped out of the house at about 4.30 in the evening of January 28th, I saw a harrier circling over our garden. Since this is a fairly treed area I wondered what this exercise meant for a bird which hunts in wide open places where the ground is clearly visible, and it can swoop down on its prey during its long gliding flight. This is not possible where the landscape is broken by high trees. But what species was it? It was dark brown, with apparently no white rump patch and three or four fairly dark bands on the underside of the tail. The beautiful illustrations on the birds of Britain and Europe by Peterson, Mountfort and Hollam did not help.

The bird was not a marsh harrier, nor a female Montagues nor a pallid harrier because these birds have a white rump as indicated by the famous Paterson identification line. Could it be a juvenile. C.M. Henry in the Birds of Ceylon has lovely illustrations, but I am still without a clue. Can someone help?

On the way to the lake (or more correctly the puddle) I saw purple - rumped sunbirds, jungle crow, tree pie, white-breasted kingfisher, black drongo, rose ringed parakeets, common myna, common swallows, a golden oriole, spotted doves, and common green bee eaters. Usually in this area I see munias, wagtails, larks, pipits, and bushchats, but none were on view. Near, and in the water, there was a beautiful congregation of black-winged stilts, and in the slanting rays of the evening sun their pink legs showed up in their true colours. There were cattle egrets, little egrets, spotted sandpipers (I think) green-shanks (identified by their jolly tew tew calls) little stints, and common sandpipers. But the bird which gave me a start was the terek sandpiper. There were two of them, and their red legs gave away their identity, or so I thought. Many years ago, it was Lavkumar who pointed out these birds to me on Kihim beach, and assured me that red legs in a sandpiper meant that it was a terek. But the Handbook says the legs of *Tringa terek* are orange - yellow, and they are found rarely away from the coast. Well I give up, and hope someone will make a helpful comment.

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### Correspondence

Jealousy among pigeons by Anwarkhan of Sultanabad: Sometime in my past I had a pair of pigeons, very devoted to one another. All went well till the 'femme terrible' entered the scene. She was younger than the other lady and most charming. What the new lady-love whispered into the males ears I do not know, but he kicked out his old spouse. There was rage in heaven. The older lady was made a determined fabric. She went out and got a good number of her friends. There was a terrific free for all. Lots of fluttering and harsh words! No one got seriously injured but the new upstart hen got the boot. When peace reigned the old pair billed and cooed as though nothing was amiss. The once jilted lady now sat in the attic like a usurped queen!

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Buckbats for the Newsletter by V. Santharam: As one, who has been associated with the 'Newsletter' for over seven years, I feel concerned and worried at the future of this vital medium of communication of the amateur birdwatchers of India. I owe a great deal to the 'Newsletter' and to you, personally for the encouragement given to me and my interest by publishing my articles in my early days of birdwatching. In fact, my interest in birds was kindled by a bound volume of the 'Newsletter', containing the issues of late 1960's borrowed from a close friend and keen birdwatcher. Even today, I derive pleasure by going through the back numbers of the 'Newsletter'. The reason for this is that the 'Newsletter' contains articles written by amateurs in simple style. I am sure many readers would agree with me on this.

Running a periodicals is, I realise, a very difficult task..... In view of the above, you certainly deserve to be congratulated on your efforts to keep the Newsletter going, despite all problems, for a quarter century.

However, from some of the recent issues, I got the impression that things are not too happy as far as the Newsletter is concerned. The issues have been coming out irregularly, the articles poorly edited and much below the usual standard. Even the number of pages have been considerably reduced. The most important reason for this is perhaps the sudden drop in the number of subscribers and contributors. This is strangely ironical due to the fact that birdwatching as a hobby is becoming more and more popular and catching up with people of all walks of life. And yet, the back-numbers of the said-period contain more useful information and interesting contributions than the recent issues. This phenomenon can be attributed to the sudden spurt of local groups and societies, each bringing out a periodical or journal. People may find it difficult to subscribe to too many such magazines and societies.

But we cannot afford to lose a forum like the 'Newsletter' which is so essential to keep in touch with bird-watchers all over the country and hear about recent findings in various localities. 'Newsletter' must grow to become the country's leading ornithological magazine as far as the amateurs are concerned. It should contain notes on sight records, local or regional birdlists, observations on various aspects of birdlife, range extensions, information on new books, equipment and techniques, news items collected from regional societies, notes on important spots from the

ornithological view point and their conservation, hints on identification of difficult bird-groups and addresses of birdwatchers all over India.

It is high time the Newsletter is given a new look, perhaps printed if funds permit, made popular and more regular. The subscription may be raised to sustain the productions - definitely at Rs.15/- a year this must be the least expensive magazine of its kind. A few youngsters and enthusiasts could be involved to assist you in the production and running of the Newsletter. You could collect articles, subscribers and, perhaps an advertisement or two.

It would be wonderful if all the subscribers were to meet annually at an informal get-together or a field camp, where they could get to meet each other and understand better. This should be thought of as the first step in the formation of an all-India Society of the Amateur birdwatchers.

I would be extremely grateful if you could give these suggestions a thought and, perhaps, improve on this. I assure you of all help and cooperation from my side".

[All the criticism is valid, and the suggestions will be carefully considered. More comments of this nature would be welcome] Editor.

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Azad Memorial Lecture 1978 by Dr.Salim Ali on Bird Study in India: Its History and its importance: (Contd....)

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Jerdon's Bird of India epitomizes the knowledge up to that period based largely upon the publications of these and several other illustrious field naturalists, and on the vast collections of skins made by them and their numerous correspondents and proteges scattered over the Company's territories. In the latter part of the 18th century, and even till well into the 19th, taxidermy was still in its infancy, and instead of making a collection of stuffed skins it was the custom in India to employ local artists to make paintings of birds. The tradition of life-like animal portraiture set by the Jahangir school was still very much alive. Many collections of bird paintings

were thus made, e.g., those of General Hardwicke and Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, and some of them became famous because of the many new species that were described on their basis in lieu of actual skins. In 1844 Jerdon himself and published a selection of 50 lithographs with descriptive letterpress entitled Illustrations of Indian Ornithology. The originals of these were drawn by Indian artists, and half the number were also lithographed and painted in Madras. It was noted at the time that 'Their excellence and the faithfulness of the drawings has been universally allowed.'

The publication of Birds of India at once gave a marked impetus to bird study in the country, still almost entirely restricted to Europeans. It found new devotees among British officials, planters and professional men, some of whom in turn were soon to become prominent names in Indian ornithology. The period thence, and right up to the publication of the first edition of the Bird volumes of the India Office-sponsored Fauna of British India series by Bates and Blanford, was completely dominated by that extraordinary personality, Allan Octavian Hume who had meanwhile appeared on the scene. Apart from his other great intellectual and humanitarian qualifications Hume's special claim to be remembered in India lies also in the fact that he was one of the original founders of the Indian National Congress, and this while still in the civil service of the Government of British India. He has, with good justification, been called 'The Father' -- and by those who were irked by his occasional dogmatism 'The Pope' -- of Indian ornithology. He collected methodically and intensively, himself as well as with the help of his numerous correspondents and proteges widely dispersed over the country, chiefly between the years 1870 and 1885, and thus brought together a collection that has doubtfully ever been equalled in magnitude in any branch of zoology or botany. It totalled some 60,000 skins of birds, in addition to a very large number of nests and over 16,000 eggs, all of which he later presented to the British Museum. Hume founded and edited a journal of Indian ornithology with the somewhat eccentric title of Stray Feathers between 1872 and 1888. Its 11 volumes containing papers by some of the more upcoming ornithologists of the time, written under his energetic guidance, and much of it by himself, are a veritable gold mine for the ornithologist and an eloquent memorial to the zeal, erudition and versatility of their remarkable editor. In Stray Feathers Hume has described a large number of novelties discovered



during the period, and this work is indispensable for any serious study of Indian birds.

Hume was a facile and prolific writer and his pungent criticisms of contemporary ornithologists and ornithological trends and his experto crede pronouncements on bureaucrats and their inanities, are often amusingly interlarded with puckish humour. His account of the hare-brained introduction "by our beneficent Government anxious to succour its suffering people from rats" on some of the inhabited islands in the Laccadive (Lakshadweep) group, and the fate of "a lot of snakes and mongooses" that had first been sent down to deal with the rodents followed by a lot of Wood Owls when the latter took to the coconut trees for escape, and in turn the doom of those unfortunate owls cast upon unforested coral shores in totally incompatible ecological conditions and under strong superstitious objection from the islanders. "Unfortunately" continues Hume slyly, "as is too commonly the case in India, popular prejudice interfered to mar the success of a paternal Government's beneficent schemes". In upshot the birds soon came to an end but not the rats! The account is too long to be quoted here in all its amusing details, but to any one who is interested in Hume or in Indian birds, or even in convincing himself that bureaucracy hasn't changed, I would strongly recommend a reference to volume 4 of Stray Feathers (pp. 433-4).

When Stray Feathers ceased publication, in 1889, most of its former contributors as well as other workers who had come into prominence meanwhile, diverted their writings to The Ibis, the journal of the British Ornithologists' Union and to the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society. The last, which made its debut in 1886 has maintained unbroken publication since then. It is now in its 75th volume and has become increasingly important in disseminating knowledge of Indian birds. It enjoys considerable scientific prestige internationally and is recognized as the foremost natural history publication in Asia. Indian ornithology received its second definitive boost after Jerdon by the publication between 1889 and 1898 of the 4 volumes on birds by Eugene W. Bates and W.T. Blanford in the Fauna of British India series. Like its predecessor this work brought together, and up to date, all the advance in knowledge resulting from the extensive researches done in field and museum during the intervening 27 years. This renewed filip was clearly responsible for producing the rash of outstanding field



ornithologists that distinguished the next 33 years up to the publication of Vol.1 of the second edition of the Fauna of British India series on Birds -- the New Fauna for short -- by E.C. Stuart Baker, himself an illustrious product of that period.

The six main volumes of the New Fauna were completed in 1930. They in turn showed up many lacunae in our knowledge, especially concerning the areas in the sub-continent imperfectly explored or not at all, such as the Eastern Ghats and the territories of many of the princely states. This generated a series of regional ornithological field surveys organised or sponsored by the Bombay Natural History Society, which resulted in significant advances in our knowledge of the ecology, systematics and distribution of Indian birds.

A feature of the years, particularly between the two World Wars and since the end of the Second, is the increased emphasis on bird watching and ecological study in India as distinct from specimen collecting. This has been facilitated, among other things, by the availability of well illustrated books on Indian birds for identification in the field and by the great improvement in technology and optics -- in binoculars, cameras, telephoto lenses, also fast films, colour photography and sound recording -- all essential tools for serious field work.

All the new accretions to knowledge have found their place in the latest work -- the 10-volume Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan referred to earlier -- along with a great deal of other data collected by several keen Indian ornithologists who had surfaced in the intervening 40 years since the New Fauna appeared -- and especially, since our Independence. The two most outstanding British ornithologists specializing in Indian birds in the period up to 1943 were Dr. Claud B. Ticehurst and Hugh Whistler, the former a Captain in the R.A.M.C. during the First World War, who had spent a couple of years in what is now Pakistan, and the latter an Imperial Police Officer in Punjab for a number of years. Since the untimely death of these two veterans -- Ticehurst in 1941 and Whistler in 1943 -- the British era of Indian ornithology has virtually ended. Most of the work thereafter has been done by Indians a few of whom have come into international prominence. A distinguished exception is my colleague and co-author of the Handbook, the American Dr. S. Dillon Ripley, now Secretary of the Smithsonian

Institution, Washington. Dr. Ripley has been closely associated with Indian ornithology and Indian ornithologists for over 30 years, both in the field and the museum, and in collaboration with Indian colleagues has undertaken several expeditions and made, and continue to make, important contributions to knowledge.

#### WHY PRESERVE BIRDS?

Well-meaning laymen are shocked at the perversity of those who advocate the protection and conservation even of such birds and wild animals as often cause considerable damage to food crops, orchard fruit, forest resources and in other ways, and are thus manifestly inimical to man's interests. Since grain-eating birds attack standing crops in broad daylight, and hawks may occasionally purloin a chicken or two from the poultry yard, their criminal mischief is clear for all to see, and sufficiently self-condemnatory. Thus many birds are arbitrarily singled out for capital punishment, and laymen are convinced that if only these 'vermin' were eliminated all would be well for the poor cultivator and his concerns. It seems to them as simple as that. Against this notion there are those who after careful study and objective assessment maintain that but for birds the world would perish, because without their unrelenting check on insect numbers no plant life would be possible, or the animal life dependent on it including Man himself. How can these two conflicting views be reconciled? That there is much truth in the latter view is evident from the facts. Over 50,000 species of insects have been described from the Indian subcontinent, doubtless with many more still to come. Many of them, such as locusts, beetles, moths, caterpillars and termites, are extremely harmful pests of agriculture and forestry upon which our national economy leans so heavily. The rates of reproduction in insects are truly astronomical. In America it has been computed that a single pair of the Colorado Beetle (Leptinotarsa decemlineata) would without natural checks -- in which birds play an important part -- increase to 60 million in a year. This insect belongs to a family (Chrysomelidae) that is prolifically represented in India. The fecundity and voracity of locusts both in the wingless hopper stage and as flying adults is well known.

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*Front Cover:* THE MASKED BOOBY (*Sula Dactylatra*)

Courtesy K. S. HARSHVARDHANA BHAT

*Back Cover:* A FEMALE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD AT KARERA

Photograph by ASAD R. RAHMANI

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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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NEWSLETTER  
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## Editorial

Good Material Flows in: The Newsletter has had a piece of great luck and we are able to publish two good pieces by two English Ornithologists who visited India in February. It is obvious not only that both of them have the experts knowledge of our birds, but that they understand, love and enjoy all aspects of our natural life and features. This makes them the best kind of friends our country can ever have.

Mr. Madge is a retired school teacher who has spent several years in Malaysia and in retirement he escapes the rigours of the English winter by travelling to various countries to enjoy their bird life. The first portion of his article is published in this issue and will be continued in the next. The Editor is most grateful to Mr. Lavkumar Khachar for acquiring this article for us.

The other piece, a short article on Birds Of Dodda Gubbi is by Richard Fitter, the famous ornithologist who is also well known for his work in the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society of London, and through several forums like the Species Survival Commission of I.U.C.N.

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Conservation Studies on Raptors (Circular by I.C.B.P.)  
Birds of prey are an awe-inspiring and fascinating group of birds. Their status and conservation are of special concern because of their value as bio-indicators. What harms them is likely to threaten us in future.

Papers by experts from all over the world are included in Conservation Studies on Raptors, fifth in the technical Publication Series from ICBP. Special attention is focussed on the plight of raptors in the Mediterranean. Sections are also devoted to Tropical Forest Raptors, and Migration of Raptors. Eight papers are devoted to the Peregrine Falcon. In addition to these studies, a major section deals with Management and Conservation issues.

Conservation Studies on Raptors is the result of the Second World Conference on Birds of Prey held at Thessaloniki, Greece, in 1982, organised by the ICBP World Working Group on Birds of Prey. Included in the volume are the proceedings of the Workshop on the Biology of Vultures. Write to ICBP 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, England for copies Price £ 25.50 free mailing.

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New service by Birders: 46 Westleigh Drive, Sonning Common, Reading, Berks, England RG4 9LB: Birders is a new agency offering a unique service to Bird artists and photographers. They specialise exclusively in ornithological subjects; and offer;

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PROSPECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS ARE REQUIRED TO WRITE FOR THEIR GUIDELINES BEFORE SUBMITTING. SPECIFY ARTIST OR PHOTOGRAPHER.

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Grants for Conservation Projects: World Birdwatch Vol.8, No.1 Spring of 1986 carries the following announcement: The US Section will consider proposals for grants of up to 1,000 dollars for conservation related projects dealing with NEW WORLD or OLD WORLD vultures. Send proposal, budget, one-page summary and resume of researcher to Richard Plunkett, Chairman ICBP - US Grants Committee, P.O. Box 37, Rupert, VT 05768, U.S.A.

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A visit to India by Graham Madge, George Hill, Crediton, Devon EX17 2Du, United Kingdom:

Karnala Bird Sanctuary: 1 February: We set out at 0530 to avoid the appalling congestion of the Bombay rush hour, for much of our 40-mile drive would be through the town. Nitin drove at first to get some practice then Atul, who had a day off work, took over with Mr. Jamdar's official driver as a silent passenger. We picked up Nitin's friend, the lively Kiran, and our next stop was by some salt marshes where I saw such homely birds as redshank, greenshank, and common sandpiper, but also marsh sandpiper and the black-winged stilts which seem to be by every water here - a very common bird.



A party of little stints took off disturbed by a marsh harrier, about 50 of them and I have never seen more than two or three at a time before. They gave us a fantastic display of massed flight, with lightning turns as they jinked to and fro, so fast that the eye could hardly follow them - clearly a defensive reaction as no predator could pick on a single bird from such a flickering flock. It is a miracle of synchronisation and one of the most stimulating things I saw in a trip full of exciting things. I still cannot think how they achieve it. I have watched dunlin in flocks of hundreds and even a thousand or so performing in a similar way, but never at such speed or with so instantaneous a flick-over at each turn.

Next stop was at a large jheel by the road - an area of water with much floating vegetation. Here there were pintail, garganey, egrets and a good number of pheasant-tailed jacanas, quite large birds and very graceful, with much white in the wings when they fly. They were in winter plumage and I have yet to see the long, arching tail feathers for the only one I have seen before was a winter visitor to Malaya, where it is very uncommon.

At Karnala we had breakfast at the shack-like restaurant inevitable omelette and sugary chai - served by a pleased man of obvious Himalayan origin (perhaps from Manali?). As we set out to climb the steep stony pathway which winds up to the great outcrop of rock we could see high above us to the left, a party of spotted babblers came through the trees at ground level, giving their lovely whistled contact calls - a nice new species to start off with. But almost immediately we found something even better - an orange-headed ground thrush Zoothera citrina, vigorously flicking over leaves as it searched for food. It was the white-throated form with the dark vertical bars on the face, a superb bird which allowed quite close approach, as did another feeding nearby. As we climbed I added the jewel-like little sunbird Nectarinia minima Tickell's flowerpecker and alexandrine parakeet to my life list, and watched a beautiful blossom-headed parakeet, well named for it looked like a brilliant flower with its bright yellow bill and richly coloured head showing above the leaves where it was perched.

Farther up Kiran, searching eagerly for the nuthatch he has yet to see, spotted a small woodpecker which Nitin identified as the pygmy Picoides nana, a delightful little bird and the only member of its family I saw on the whole

trip - which is an indication of the extent to which the woods had forests have been demolished, once you get away from such areas as the Western Ghats and on to the cultivation of the plains. It was one of a bird wave and there was the usual problem of knowing what to look at first. I soon picked up a golden-fronted chloropsis which was new for me, then an old friend of Malayan days, the black-nape blue flycatcher. There was also common woodshrike, black-headed oriole, little minvets, iora and two phylloscopi- one the large-crowned leaf warbler occipitalis and the other unidentified but? large-billed. Earlier we saw common shama but alas, not in song at this time of year. In Malaya I regarded it as a supreme performer with a fantastic repertoire of notes often delivered at breath-taking speed.

With so much of interest to see I had not noticed the steepness of the path but it was becoming steeper, in places almost a scramble, and we were being passed by young boys of St. John's Baptist School, some of them making heavy weather of the climb. At last the path levelled out to a col which leads across to the final scramble to the ruins of the old fortifications built into and round the base of the towering rock, on the cliffs of which a pair of shaheen (Indian PG, sub sp. peregrinator) are said to nest. We had one falcon flying high overhead but it seemed too thin winged for a PG and I thought perhaps it might be laggar but having watched that species very closely since that doesn't seem right either. so it must go on the unidentified list of raptors which one always collects in new country.

Atul and I decided we had gone far enough so rested while Nitin and Kiran went onto the old fort. Dusky crag martins were flying round and white backed vultures passing. A bird flew into the tree under which Atul was resting with my camera beside him and I called him to look at it (a blue rockthrush) and when I glanced back there was a bonnet monkey walking towards my camera and rucksack! We were just in time to stop it making off with one or other of them. When we were re-joined by N and K we saw a thick-billed flowerpecker come to the tree to feed on the tiny fruits there. Another came and fluttered over it several times and I could clearly see a white line across its crown and down the nape. It seemed to be showing this in display and did it several times. When we got home I wrote a note about it for the Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. to send to Abdulali. I thought it was probably opening out the feathers of its crown to reveal the white bases but Nitin has since looked at skins and said these are not white. There is no doubt that the white was showing when it approached the

presumed female but not when it was away from her. Perhaps special white erectile feathers are grown for display?

As we returned I realised what a long climb we had - perhaps nearly 2,000 ft, and was ready for a good long drink. In spite of notice at restaurant, 'Sale of liquor prohibited' Atul and I had a large bottle of beer each ('keep it off the table out of sight') which was much appreciated and we all followed our lunch with a siesta - a sound sleep in my case. Then we did some more birding nearby and had a beautiful white-phase male paradise flycatcher, also verditer and grey-headed and a nun babbler which came to my squeak. On the way home we passed a famous water melon area with thousands of the giant green footballs for sale on roadside stalls. We stopped at one to eat slices of the refreshing fruit but it had a strange taste and this was because it was salted! However I ate two slices - and kicked (gently) a sacred cow which was very persistent in trying to raid the stall - the owner threw stones at it - and we moved on to stop again at the jheel where there was now one openbill stork, (another new bird) and about 12 purple gallinules fully in the open with plenty of other birds.

As we got back to the town it was soon nightfall and we were in the streams of inter-weaving traffic where miracles of crash avoidance occur every minute, when the engine cut out. Over heating was diagnosed by Atul, our motor engineer, and we had to push it to the side of the road while hooting maniacs edged past, and raise the bonnet to let it cool off. It was a relief when it started again ten minutes later and we got home without incident, only stopping to buy a couple of plants from a shop I spotted so that I could give them to Mrs. Jamdar and Smita. Mr. Jamdar was waiting for a friend so Nitin, Atul and I went ahead to have dinner. Alas! the salted water melon was making me feel uneasy and I felt I could not take one more spoonful of soup without disgracing myself, so had to ask to be excused. The queasiness passed and I had a good night's rest and able to explain the situation though I felt ashamed at not having been able to eat the dinner they had prepared. The expected guest never arrived though Mr and Mrs Jamdar waited till midnight. He turned up after b'fast next morning having stayed with other friends after a late meeting and some road blockage due to an accident.

This was a very special day out, with the most excellent light-hearted and enthusiastic companions and, following yesterday's trip to Borivli N.P. with Humayun Abdulali



where we apprehended first a boy who had killed a yellow-th. sparrow with a catapult and then a man and youth making off with large bundles of wood illegally taken, has given me an impressive list of birds to begin my visit to India.

Ahmedabad and Nalsarover 4-5 February: The 1st class sleeper, with four to a compartment, on the Bombay night mail to A. was reasonably comfortable. One of my companions, list as "Mr. Rev." turned out to be a R.C. priest, a charming man with whom I had a good conversation and found he had enlightened views on such things as family planning. Arrived at A. 0645 and Lal was there to greet me. It was lovely to see him again (although there is so little to see - he weights about 90 lb!). We were soon in an autoshow and speeding through the town - more miracles as we missed others by mms. His home is near the edge of this Manchester of India - a highly polluted town with many factories - and after a rest we went for a walk in nearby fields where there were birds everywhere, and then across the road to an open area of arid ground with some murky pools where various waders were sampling the delights to be found around them. Desert wheather was a new bird and there were tawny pipits, rufous and bay-backed shrikes and ashy-crowned finchalarks. On our walk we passed a splendid example of craftwork in the form of an ox cart, beautifully made, the wood being bound with strips of patterned metal. It ought to be in a museum.

After lunch Jayantilal arrived complete with M/C and sidecar. He was to come with us to Nalsarover. Did I object to riding in the sidecar instead of on the bus? Of course not but could we all, with my luggage, be got abroad? J., whom I had met at Anali and recalled once that was pointed out to me, inspires confidence and we were soon loaded with a tent under my legs, my rucksack and air travel bag on my knees, a supply of food stowed somewhere, my case tied amidships and Lal perched on the pillion, we whizzed off out of town and along the country roads, myself protecting complexion from windburn with a copy of the Times of India because there was no windshield. It was exhilarating, speeding along under over arching banyan trees in places, and passing bands of colourful nomads and numerous camel-drawn carts laden with cereal crops for it was harvest time. Camels seem to me to be the most mechanical of all draught animals as they plod along like automatons. A lucky roadside stop produced a pair of spotted owlets which Lal heard calling from a nearby tree where they were perched,



cuddled up together - another new bird, close relative of our little owl but without the frowning expression and really much sweeter.

It was getting towards evening as we neared Nalsarover. Near the lake (Nal = lake) the road has water on either side and there were birds everywhere. On the far side to the left a thousand or so Demoiselle cranes were being joined by flocks coming in and adding to their numbers. At one time the sky seemed full of these splendid birds, great swirling masses as the flock rose and moved across to the other side. There were large flocks of painted storks, spoonbills, pelicans and various herons, egrets and masses of pintail and shoveller. It was like a dream come to life.

At the forest department's buildings (no tourism accommodation here now) we asked if we could stay at the guest house. For this permission was needed from the senior officer living some miles away. J. set off with one of the chaps and Lal said, 'If he says yes I shall be surprised; if he says no, not surprised' but when J. came back it was yes, so instead of putting up the tent and having the discomfort of camping we had a good room and bathroom and very comfortable beds.

Next morning we hired a flat bottomed boat and a man poled us around the shallow lake. Plenty of lovely greater flamingoes, and some lesser, Caspian and gull-billed terns, numerous pintail and shoveller, some common teal, large, middle and little egrets, grey and purple heron, spoonbills, black and sacred ibis, coot perhaps the most numerous bird there, osprey overhead, brown-headed gulls and, a very exciting bird, the enormous greater black-headed gull - 12 in one party and others seen later. Two pelicans of greyish tinge and almost orange pouches were Dalmatians (I saw lots of these at other places later and they are easy to pick out even without seeing the wing pattern in flight. We also had chestnut-bellied sandgrouse, common snipe, black-tailed godwits (many-but Lal once saw the whole area covered with them - perhaps 100,000 probably a build-up on migration). Brahminy ducks (Ruddy shelduck also seen; very colourful and impressive, goose-like birds, with deep voices.

Also seen were glossy ibis, avocets, widgeon, pochard, moorhen, pied kingfisher, curlew, Kentish plover, spotted redshank, gadwall, redshank, pratincole, golden plover and little stint. A special bird was the white-tailed lapwing - the only one I saw on the whole visit.

The previous evening we had the most glorious sunset. From the front of the Guest House one looks across the lake and the whole sky was that indescribable colour one gets in tropical countries, the golden, fulvous glow, which was reflected in the water, with an osprey in silhouette against the sky as it flew to and fro hunting late above the lake. Then the full moon rose behind me looking so crisp and clear that one felt it could almost be touched. It was a deeply moving moment.

Nalsarover has some problems. I hear a rumour of trapping ducks by non-vegetarian locals, and if boat trips are too frequent they could have a disturbing effect, especially if people chase after the feeding birds for close view or photography. But it is clearly a very important wintering area and staging post for migrants and one can only be glad it is protected as a bird sanctuary. I would have liked to stay longer but our programme drew us inexorably on and, in order to get to Tangathra and the Little Rann of Kutch we had to be at Sanad to catch a bus by 1930. So we loaded up and got on the road, stopping here and there to look at birds of interest. An obvious laggar falcon flew over us and away before I could check any details to make quite sure it was not a saker (some are said to winter in north India), and we had a pied chat - like a stonechat but black and white. There was a mass of vultures by the roadside about 10 Km before Sanad and we stopped to look at them. About 60 were surrounding two buffalo carcasses and there were more on the ground and in a tree across a field. There were plenty of white backs and some longbills but there were also bigger vultures with brown plumage and pale heads and we commented on them but the fact that we were looking at griffons Gyps Fulvous did not dawn on me till later on when Richard and his party saw a crowd of about 500 vultures of 5 species while we were at Hingolghadh - griffon, whiteback, longbill, Egyptian and and one black which is rare, but no king (also rare).

Jayantilal and I walked across the field hoping we might find a king vulture and we had the ponderous great birds flapping heavily along the ground ahead of us. Then J. stopped a raptor perched on a low tree farther on and we decided to check it while Lal kindly remained with the bike. As we walked we saw small mongoose and then a pale, brownish shrike with rufous-tinged tail - none other than isabelline (a new bird, as I missed the one at Berry Head, Devon, last autumn, so that omission was made good). As we walked on in the quite hot sunshine we could see storks coming in high over a field some way ahead, and planning down until they were out of sight behind a high bank. As we approached the

eagle, which looked black as it sat in the tree, it took off and flew away from us with heavy wing beats. The upper surface was very dark with no white on the wing at all and a very clear, narrow white crescent on the rump at base of tail. At first I thought lesser spotted but on looking them up it was too dark, had too clear white showing on rump, and the lesser spotted I remember from Zambia had a small white almost rectangular patch on the upper wing surface, which is shown well in the illustrations I have looked up, especially in Birds of Western Palearctic. So I feel safe in claiming this as my first greater spotted eagle - thanks to Jayantilal whose idea it was to have a closer look at it.

Having gone so far we decided to go farther and check the storks, and how fortunate this was! We approached under cover of the bank, sneaked up it and peered over. There were about 70 painted storks, 50 demoiselle cranes, a few grey herons, redwattled lapwings, some teal on a small pond and? I could hardly believe my eyes? 35 magnificent sarus cranes. They were so near and as we moved higher first the ducks took off, then the demoiselles and herons, followed by the storks; but the sarus car cranes held their ground and, after gazing our fill, we left them there. They have long been regarded as sacred in India and being unmolested have become fearless and allow close approach. This was one of the most thrilling moments I have had in many years of bird watching for it was a complete surprise and we were so close to those towering, aristocratic and graceful birds. There is an indelible picture of them painted on my mind.

Also tawny eagle seen here with a pale patch on outer, upper wing - prob, immature. We had to leave and hurried on to Sanad, stopping only to have a close look at a white-eyed buzzard perched on a telegraph pole - immature, but another new bird for me and I am glad we stopped for I saw very few others during the trip. At Sanad, after some skilful manouvring through crowded streets (market day) Lal and I got off at the bus station while J. went off to park the bike with a friend. At this out of the way place all bus notices were in Gujarati and no one seemed to speak English and I soon became the centre of attention with a crowd of people and children with smiling faces gathered round to look as if I had dropped from outer space. They just didn't seem to get tired of looking, though they were dispersing after about 20 minutes!

When the bus came in it was full with people already atanding. Nothing deterred, J. forced his way on with my



case and Lal and I squeezed in somehow with yet others following until we were packed so tight that there was hardly room for my feet. How the poor conductor gets round to take tickets I can't think. He just seems to slither between the people. We played a game - birds' names beginning with A,B,C etc. to pass the time and eventually some people got off and I got a seat. What a relief! More people left at various stops. and we settled down to the long drive to Thangathra. It was 1030 when we got there and bundled into an autoshow and set off for Uday Voral's house, hoping they would not all be in bed. Fortunately they were still up, including the baby, so we had some tea and a good chat with Uday, who is the officer in charge of the Little Rann Nature Reserve, and has found where the Flamingoes are breeding after they had moved from their traditional 'flamingo city'. Unfortunately he has to be off to an important meeting some distance away early in the morning, and his jeep is under repair, so it was decided that we would have a taxi with Uday's driver to guide us, to look for the wild asses and go to a place way out somewhere, where large numbers of common cranes have been coming to water. Slept well but heard Uday come into the room at 0530 to get some papers from a cupboard before leaving to catch a bus, so, poor chap, he had only had a few hour's sleep. (to be continued.....)

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Birds in Dodda Gubbi by Richard Fitter: When I was at Doddagubbi two years ago, the tank, which had provided such excellent birdwatching on previous visits, had become quite dry. Since it was quite a large tank, extending to 100 acres, I was astonished as well as sorry. So I was delighted on my visit in February 1986 to find some water again in one corner of the tank. There was not very much water, but it was enough to provide a splendid morning's birdwatching. To start with the largest birds, five painted storks made a splendid spectacle as they walked in a line feeding head down in the shallow water. Then there were three or four white-necked storks standing round the edge, but not feeding. Among the herons there was a single grey heron, a single little egret, which flew off revealing the yellow soles of its feet, a small party of cattle egrets, assorted pond herons and another large singleton, a great white egret, or great white heron as we should perhaps get used to calling it again, now that the taxonomists have transferred it from the genus Egretta to the genus Ardea.



The water was so shallow that only one species of waterfowl was present in the shape of three common teal, but there were more than a dozen species of wader. The largest of these was the black-winged stilt, followed by a small party of greenshanks, together with their smaller look alike, the marsh sandpiper. The snipe were presumably pintail snipe, since the authorities agree that this is a much commoner species in southern India than the fantail snipe. A party of Temminck's stints and two curlew-sandpipers, together with a common sandpiper and quite a number of wood sandpipers, completed the tally of waders other than plovers. On an adjacent rice paddy there were also two green sandpipers. The list of plovers was headed by some handsome red-wattled plovers, followed by quite a party of 20 or more little ringed plovers and a smaller number of Kentish plovers.

The only other distinctively waterside birds were a male marsh harrier, which stayed on the ground by the water's edge all the time and never gave a display of his graceful flight, and a few wagtails, mainly white but also one grey.

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The white and black storks by Lavkumar Khachar, Hingolghadh Nature Conservation, 14 Javant Society, Rajkot 360 004:

While no one can be happy about the tremendous size in human population in our country, we certainly must rejoice at the apparent increase in white stork numbers in Gujarat. Why I mention these two facts is that these attractive birds are believed by Europeans to bring babies and drop them down chimneys - or so they tell their children when posed with the not very very surprising question children ask about their origin. Fortunately, our Ministers and their attendant flunkies have not been brought up on this fable as otherwise we might well have orders being issued to either shoot the birds or shoo them away from our country - this is no joke really, since we had a leader demanding that artificial rain be caused to break the desperate drought!

Some two decades ago, a white stork in a morning's birdwatch was cause for excitement and even in the Bhal country south of Nal Sarovar where they were normally to be seen, their numbers never were large. It is not unusual to find upto a hundred of them feeding together. They are also a regular sight on the sparse grassy "beds" in the little Rann of Kutch. Not only are the numbers

increasing, but the areas visited are expanding.

We have been seeing the black stork more frequently in Saurashtra of late. I saw my first black stork in the 1970's! Today one or half a dozen are not unusual on the reservoirs. Either the numbers have increased or the birds are being driven out of a wider wintering range.

While the white stork ranges out onto grasslands and dry fallow fields, the black stork spends its time near water. Adult openbilled storks *Anastomus oscitans* have the same colour pattern as the white stork and at a quick glance can be confused with it, but the latter's red legs and dagger-shaped red bill are very distinctive. The white-necked stork *Ciconia episcopus* sitting hunched up might be mistaken for the black stork, but normally the white neck is very distinctive.

All storks are large birds and have broad wings which aid them in soaring like vultures. This permits them along with pelicans to cover large areas in search of suitable wetlands. Our resident species of storks are very mobile though they do tend to converge on traditional nesting sites. It becomes very important then, to identify such locations, and to have the trees strictly protected, and where ever possible, trees should be planted on raised bunds in wetland areas to provide nesting locations.

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#### CORRESPONDENCE

My observations of white backed vultures by Snehal S. Patel, 81 Sarjan Society, Surat, 395007: One particular group of vultures which I observed, used to gather around a small lake in the early part of the day after sunrise, and one by one they used to take a dip in the cold water at a particular spot where it was shallow. They would then walk to a small field beside the lake and spread their wings open with their back to the sun for sun drying - exactly the same way humans do on a beach.

By the time everyone finished their bath, the complete field would get covered with the sunbathers drying off their feathers. I was reminded of freshly laundered jackets spread out to dry on the grass!

As this group was large, birds had to wait for their turn in the water, but it seemed they were in no hurry,

and we apparently prepared to do things in a leisurely fashion. There was no pushing or jostling around like mere mortals tend to do. After the wings dried, many of the birds would lie down flat on the ground and doze. Then suddenly a few of the birds would take off and the rest would follow, and their unending search for food would start.

These vultures are very regular, every morning between 9.30 am and 10 am a group of about 50 to 70 of them glided past my premises from west to east and in the evening they returned at around 5 p.m. It is a well known fact that vultures use thermals pockets of hot air rising up as the ground gets heated up. They simply have to glide up on the rising air upto a great height from where they scan the ground below for dead or dying animals. This group of vultures have put modern industry to good use - they are high up in the sky well before the thermals become strong enough to provide a lift - by using rising smoke columns of factory chimneys! They can be watched spiralling upwards in the smoke. Once they have gained some height they slip out and glide across to another smoke column, the speed they gain on the glide sends them up higher in the other smoke column.

Lavkumar Khachar, to whom I sent my observations, tells me that he has come across once seen a dozen vultures on the ground, heavy with feeding off a carcass, run towards a passing whirlwind and getting air-borne in the whirling column of rising dust.

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About Vultures by A.P. Gupta, C/o. Eklavya, 293 Vivekanand Colony, Ujjain 456 001, M.P.: It was interesting to read Arun Kumar Banerjee's observations about the smelling powers of vultures (Newsletter, Nov-Dec. 1984).

The following are some extracts from 'A text-book of Zoology' by Parker and Haswell (Seventh edition revised by A.J. Marshall):

"The olfactory sense in most birds is notoriously poor, but Aoteryx (Kiwi) is distinguished by the high development of the olfactory chamber, which extends from the tip of the beak to the level of the optic Foramina.."

....."Also sea-going procellariiformes (petrels, albatrosses), which emit a characteristically strong and peculiar odour possess remarkably developed olfactory



organs.... There is some evidence that these sea-scavengers locate their food partly by scent. It is possible (but not proved) that vultures, also possessed of a remarkably complex olfactory apparatus, may do likewise".

It should be possible to perform some simple experiments to find out whether vultures have a well developed sense of smell or not.

Another interesting observation about vultures comes from Martin woodcock in 'Collins Hand guide to the Birds of the Indian Sub-continent'.

".....Although a disgusting feeder, often entering a carcass to pull out the entrails, it misses no opportunity to bathe when water is available".

Amazing, isn't it? I have seen many a vulture, but never of the bathing type. What about other readers?

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Azad Memorial Lecture by Dr.Salim Ali (Concluded):

xxxxxxxThey lay eggs in the soil, each female laying several capsules or egg-masses of 50 to a hundred eggs each. On a S.African farm of 3300 acres no less than 14 tons of eggs have been dug up, estimated to have produced 1250 million locusts. Locust swarms, often covering up to 300 square km and consisting of hundreds of million insects, are sometimes so thick as to obscure the sun, and when on the ground may hold up railway traffic by causing the wheels of locomotives to slip on the tracks. A visitation of such proportions will, in the course of a few short hours, reduce a smiling green tract of hundreds of hectares into a desolate waste of bare stems. White storks and Rosy Pastors and many other birds are traditional predators and take relentless toll of locusts throughout the year although their activities may make little apparent dent at the time of actual swarming.

A large proportion of the normal food of the majority of birds consists of insects. Some idea of the vast extent of their beneficent activities may be obtained from the fact that many young birds in the first few days of their lives consume more than their own weight of food in 24 hours. Even those species that are predominantly granivorous as adults feed their nest-young almost entirely on



soft bodied protein-rich insects till they are fledged. Birds have phenomenal appetites. The energy required for flight is generated by their rapid digestion and the efficiency of their metabolism. Birds of Prey, such as the hawks and owls, often unjustly accused of delinquency and slaughtered out of hand, are amongst the most important of Nature's checks on rats and mice, the most fecund and destructive non-insect pests from which man and his works suffer. Rats have a staggering reproduction potential. They produce 6 litters of an average 8 young per annum, and begin to breed when 3 and half months old. Hypothetically this means that if the progeny was of equal sexes, and all the young survived, a single pair would increase to 880 rats by the year's end! As is well known, these rodents are responsible for the destruction of between 10 and 25 percent of our entire food crops annually, either in the field or as stored grain. A scientific investigation undertaken in the rice growing tracts of the Indus Delta in Lower Sind before partition -- in 1926 -- revealed the annual damage caused by the Sind Mole Rat (Gunomys sindicus, now Bandicota bengalensis kok) in that area to be between 10 and 50 percent of the total crop and of the order of Rs. 23 lakhs. And that was at a time when paddy was selling at 12 kg per rupee, again believe it or not! Owls and the diurnal birds of prey are some of Nature's most important controls on rodent populations. The food of the larger owls consists chiefly of rats and mice. It has been found that a single such owl takes 2 or 3 rats per night. Every two rats destroyed hypothetically means a potential suppression of 880 rats annually. And considering that this good work is carried on for 365 nights in a year with no strikes and no paid holidays, and not by a single owl but by the entire local population of owls, some idea of the untold good they do may be obtained.

Another of the more important activities and impacts of birds on our national economy, which has not yet been properly appreciated or studied, is their role in the fertilization of flowers and the dispersal of seeds, and thus on the character of our indigenous flora and natural vegetation. Many species of birds are adapted morphologically by the structure of their bill and tongue for a diet of nectar and are in a great measure responsible for cross-pollinating certain flowers in the same as bees and butterflies. There are reciprocal adaptations in ornithophilous flowers -- or 'bird flowers' as they are popularly known ... to promote cross-pollination in the process of nectar seeking by the bird visitor. It may not be generally known that the large showy rosy red flowers of the semal or silk cotton

tree (*Bombax ceiba*); which carry a generous supply of nectar, are largely dependant on birds for their fertilization and thus for the natural regeneration of the semal tree, and the sustained yield of the principal basic soft wood for our flourishing safety match industry, which has an annual turnover of several crore rupees. A good example of beneficial seed dispersal by frugivorous birds is the mulberry (*Morus alba*) tree first planted on the banks of irrigation canals in the desert areas of Punjab as a sand-binding and anti-erosion measure. The birds took to the fruit avidly and returned the bounty by broadcasting the seeds in their dropping far and wide, creating abundant natural regeneration of the mulberry tree and showing the way for commercial plantations. Mulberry wood constitutes the principal raw material for the thriving sports goods industry for which Punjab has become famous. In 1976-77 India exported over Rs.2 crore worth of sports goods, such as cricket bats, hockey sticks, tennis and badminton rackets and other items, to the benefit of our Foreign Exchange reserves. The Sandalwood tree (*Santalum album*), one of the major revenue producers in Karnataka State, also owes its natural abundance to the broadcasting of its seeds by frugivorous birds.

It must be conceded, however, that like most good things in life, the activities of birds are also double-sided. On the debit side of their account must be entered in bold letters their highly negative role in the propagation of noxious weeds, either by fertilizing their flowers such as of the ornithophilous mistletoes (of the plant family Loranthaceae) or by the dispersal of their undigested viable seeds, as also those, for example, of the pernicious Lantana weed. The mistletoes -- locally known as 'bandha' or 'karazdar' -- are plant parasites that infest orchard trees like mango or guava, and valuable timber stands such as teak and sal. By boring its roots into the tissues of the host-tree and sucking the sap -- its life blood -- the parasite reduces bearing capacity in the former case, and retards normal growth of wood in the latter, causing considerable economic loss to fruit grower and forester alike. The thousands of square kilometres that have been overrun and rendered unproductive by the Lantana, though a comparatively recent exotic plant introduction, owes largely to the appeal of its lavishly produced berries to fruit-eating birds.

Birds often pose problems other than the direct harm they sometimes do to Man's food resources and allied concerns which, however, they largely compensate, by their counter-vailing beneficent services. For instance, they unwittingly act as hosts of zoo parasites, both internal and external or as carriers of vectors of pathogenic viruses of Man and his livestock, and disseminate them across the world in the course of their migratory wanderings. In recent years a further cause for their indictment has arisen, namely the increasing hazard they pose to aviation. This has become a serious worldwide problem with the development of fast flying jet aircraft. In spite of considerable sophisticated research in all advanced countries no permanent solution is yet in sight. In India it is chiefly kites and vultures that are responsible for causing serious 'bird strikes' or direct collisions with aircraft, frequently resulting in fatal crashes. Small birds occasionally get sucked into the air intakes of jet engines necessitating extremely expensive repairs or even the complete scrapping of costly engines. Whether birds deserve the blame for such mishaps, or Man himself for trespassing into the bird's pristine domains, is, of course, a matter of opinion!

However, taking all things into the reckoning, there is little doubt that the good birds do far outweighs the harm, and they therefore deserve the most stringent protection. It is a hackneyed common-place, nevertheless only too true--and more so in this increasing material age -- that Man does not live by bread alone. By the gorgeousness of their plumages and the loveliness of their forms, by the vivaciousness of their movements and the sweetness of their songs birds typify Life and Beauty. Verily they number among those important trifles that supplement bread in the sustenance of Man and make his living worth while. And to close this plea on behalf of the birds, and for their protection and conservation, I can do no better than quote the introductory remarks of a world renowned biologist the late Sir A. Landsborough Thomson, Chairman of a symposium held in London a few years ago on 'The Problems of Birds as Pests'. He said: "Birds are to a great extent economically beneficial; they are also, of course, scientifically interesting and aesthetically delightful. Yet some species tend to be harmful, and others become pests when present in excessive numbers or in the wrong places. Our task is, dispassionately and objectively, to determine the facts and consider what to do".

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*Front Cover:* THE MASKED BOOBY (*Sula Dactylatra*)

Courtesy K. S. HARSHVARDHANA BHAT

*Back Cover:* A FEMALE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD AT KARERA

Photograph by ASAD R. RAHMANI

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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

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Editorial:

Typing Errors: On going through the March-April issue of the Newsletter, we are appalled at the number of spelling mistakes. One letter understandably asks: 'Who is your proof reader?' The answer is, of course nobody. The problem of correcting the mistakes which occur on the stencil is daunting and time consuming and delaying, and so they are allowed to pass. But, in all seriousness, we will try to put this right. Meanwhile apologies to readers and contributors.

Article by Graham Madge in March-April issue: The Author, Page 4 refers to the orange-headed ground thrush (*Zoothera citrina*) in Karnala. When we were in Kihim, (less than 50 miles away from Karnala) in May, these birds were in full song. On page 5 Madge says 'we saw shamas, but alas not in song at this time of the year'. We were luckier, for we heard three shamas singing beautifully in the ever-green forest on top of Kankeshwar hill near Kihim on the 17th of May. There is now an increasing awareness about the usefulness of birds as indicators of the environment, and Madge's comment about the absence of woodpeckers - because the woods have disappeared is a sad commentary on our deteriorating environment.

A Group for the Indian Bustard?: Asad Rafi Rahmani, Project Scientist, Endangered Species Project, writes to say that 'the time has come to form a pressure group for the Indian Bustards. When I met him recently, I suggested that we should put a note in the Newsletter to find out if any of our readers who stay in bustard country would be willing to monitor the habitats where the G.I.B. occurs and keep regularly in touch with Mr. Rahmani at BNHS. Those of our readers who are willing to exert themselves in the interest of this bird, may please write to Mr. Rahmani at the BNHS. The ESP is a very worthwhile endeavour, and one which is proving successful as the rediscovery of Jerdon's Courser indicates. See letter in correspondence section.

Newsletter Competition for those with long memories or good cross indexes: We reproduce a para from an article in the Newsletter. The first correct answer indicating the volume in which it was published, the page, and Author, will receive a cheque of Rs.20/-.

'A grey reef heron was seen frequently at the river mouth. While feeding, now and then it would spread out its wings fanwise and feed inside the umbrella of feathers.



I understand that this enables the bird to see its prey more easily by shutting out the glare of the sun'

Missing Numbers in the Editor's File: We have been dealing with requests for old issues without checking on the stock position. In consequence the following issues are missing from the reference file, and we would be very grateful if someone can spare these copies. If necessary, we will have these xeroxed and return the originals.

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Kabini River Lodge by Aamir Ali, 14 Chemin de la Tourelle, 1209 Petit Sacconex, Geneva, Switzerland: One grows accustomed to the natural hazards of visiting a national park: confirmed bookings that vanish on arrival like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing; plumbing that doesn't work; tours that are supposed to start at a particular time but don't get going till an hour later for no known reason. (Oh, no, it's better in the dark. You can see their eyes. We have very fine spotlights(; wild life films that haven't been rewound or which can't be shown because the projector is out of order or never worked anyway.

The Kabini river lodge, on the edge of the Naharhole national park, about an hour and a half's drive from Mysore, is different. It is a joint venture of Tiger Tops (where elephant polo comes from) and the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation. Rennie and Maggie would say that this is just another proof that private enterprise is better.

Once upon a time, this was the Maharaja's private hunting lodge, with a special house overlooking the river for visiting Viceroys and another, discreetly lower down, for the Maharaja himself. Two new lodges built in harmony with the old ones, cater to today's visitors of less regal standing. Clean, well kept, hot water geysers that work, a pleasant and sensible dining room open at the sides where you can face the river-lake during the day and the roaring fire in the centre of the room at night.

The great Mysore kheddass took place up river; the last one was in 1972 and two lonely wooden pillars remain to mark the spot. Now, as our guide woefully informed us: There is much unemployment among elephants. The Forest Department's elephants in the timber camp nearby are let out at night to forage for themselves for who can collect the tons of fodder necessary?

Two days at the Lodge mid February 86 with the editor of our Newsletter, in the capable hands of the director, Mr. Wakefield, and the senior nature guide, Mr. Ajoy, were an unalloyed pleasure. The Drought of the Century had shrivelled the lake and the forest was brittle dry - but the important thing was that there was forest.

Elephants are in a class by themselves. On a three-hour outing by jeep, we saw six different groups, including one on the other side of the river in the neighbouring sanctuary of Bandipur. As dusk fell, we drove down to Mastiguddi (a pleasant name for a pleasant place) on the shores of the lake. The guide stopped us and on the left, slowly emerging from the forest, grey in the fading grey light, was the massive form of a solitary tusker. Silently, he stopped to watch us, grown accustomed to intruding humans. Fifteen minutes later, as we returned from the lake, he was still there, watching to make sure that we left his domain.

Looking at him, it was difficult not to think of the great Ahmed of Marsabit, who had become a legend in his lifetime before he, too, fell victim to human avarice. Though we saw many elephants that day, there was always a sadness in watching them - a nagging feeling that in spite of the efforts of conservationists and the establishment of national parks, we would not long allow these magnificent creatures the space they need to live free. In the world of today, where technology and human populations accelerate at frightening speeds, we seemed to be busy turning the elephant into an anachronism.

What did the solitary tusker think in that large brain of his as he watched our jeep finally leave his premises? Did he resent the intrusion? Did he realise that this forked, two-legged animal, - 'in apprehension how like a god! ... the paragon of animals!' - was, through mindless proliferation, squeezing him and his breed from the face of the earth - his earth? Twenty years ago, Peter Mathiesen wrote of elephants: 'There is a

mystery behind that masked grey visage, an ancient life force, delicate and mighty, awesome and enchanted, commanding the silence ordinarily reserved for mountain peaks, great fires and the sea".

And before it got completely dark, there was the loud, defiant call of a tiger, across the river. A fitting comment on these speculations.

A few days later, I saw Salim Ali in Bombay, he had just returned from a Rajya Sabha session in Delhi, where he had tabled a question. He asked how it was that there continued to be an export trade worth crores - yes, crores - of rupees in forbidden wild animal products? And how was it that there were agents accepting orders for fresh skins of tigers, leopards and other cats to be supplied within a few weeks?

On the Lakeside, near a herd of elephants, there was a flock of whitenecked storks, white and black, very smart looking, with red legs and black caps. Obviously, a fairly common bird since they received only passing attention from our guides, but a very attractive sight.

And nearby, on a stump, a shikra sat motionless, with its bluish back turned to us. It flew off, demonstrating its flight pattern flap, flap, flap - glide. The next day we saw another one in the forest; this one let our jeep come up pretty close before giving its own demonstration of the flap-glide flight.

In the early morning, there was a coracle ride on the lake, from Mastiguddi. The coracle was made of three buffalo skins stretched over a cane frame and accommodated the six of us comfortably. Ideal for its purpose: slow and silent, causing a minimum of disturbance to the birds. Whether it was equally ideal for the early Irish who are said to have crossed the Atlantic in coracles, seems more doubtful.

The lake (I have referred to it sometimes as a lake and sometimes as a river, as the spirit moved me) was formed in recent times by damming the river, drowning a goodly area of forest. Villagers had to be resettled on land made cultivable by clearing more goodly areas of forest, and installing them in artificial villages with neat rows of houses lacking the haphazard homeliness of a natural village.



Our guide, Mr. Ajoy, asked: What right did we have to destroy so much forest? Did we ask permission from the animals who owned it? It was a pleasure to be with Ajoy. He was knowledgeable, largely self taught, and passionate in his love of the forest and its inhabitants. Having done a course at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute at Darjeeling, he was a keen rock climber as well as naturalist.

As we coracled along, the bare tops of drowned trees gave a petrified forest look and provided perches for a variety of birds. Little cormorants and shags sunned themselves; a darter waited patiently on the shore, near a couple of purple herons. Two openbilled storks with their red and black bills, waited motionlessly for a toothsome frog or two to come along. On a group of bare dead trees, there were several night herons, black capped and hunched up like wise old men telling each other sad tales of battles long ago.

Egrets, of course, were ubiquitous. One flapped its way leisurely across the water. Do you know why they fly so close to the water? asked Ajoy. Because their wing flaps create an updraft against the water and help to keep them aloft - like hovercraft. And a little later, as we watched three unsuccessful but dramatic dives of a pied kingfisher, Ajoy came up with another tit bit: He always positions himself with the sun behind, so the prey is blinded and cannot see him. Like, he might have added, fighter planes, attacking.

How clever of the birds to have learnt so much from us!

By himself, on a tree, a brownheaded storkbilled kingfisher waited, his enormous bill ready for action, but not willing to waste his energy like his pied cousin. Wiretailed and barn swallows skimmed over the water, showing off as usual; pied and grey wagtails patrolled the shore, together with an occasional sandpiper.

Watching the birds in the early morning was generally more cheerful than watching animals in the forest. One did not have the sombre impression of a world ending with a whimper. There was colour and activity and even the drowned trees seemed to be serving a useful purpose.

Next morning, in front of the Lodge, on a dead tree half out of the water, there were nine egrets, four on one side and five on the other. Motionless. A light mist on



the water behind them. The water, too, was absolutely still. A Japanese painting. How wrong we are to allow familiarity with egrets to breed indifference. A couple of days later, near the editor's house in Bangalore, there was a flock of about 70 egrets in what remained of a little lake after the D. of the C: a dazzling display in white, offering a strong contrast to the dry brown earth around.

In and around the Lodge, we saw two Goldfronted Chloropsis (ses? ises?) green as the leaves of the tree among which they hid, given away by their golden foreheads, bright in the sunlight. Ioras, in breeding plumage; a blackheaded cuckoo-shrike; several Goldenbacked woodpeckers; an osprey; hoopoes; purple sunbirds; scarlet minivets; tree pies; an Indian Robin; redwhiskered and redvented bulbuls. And in the forest we saw peafowl; grey jungle fowl; lapwings; grey herons and plenty of spotted doves. And I cannot resist adding that three days later, at Nandi, we had a good clear view of a Tickell's blue flycatcher, because it was one of those lovely sights that remain fresh in one's memory.

Of animals other than elephants, we saw wild boar at a waterhole, black and very large; herds of chital; sambar; langur; barking deer; blacknaped hare; and bonnet macaques. One, named Charlie, came at lunch time to accept food from Mr. Wakefield.

And once, there was a glimpse of a leopard moving through the bushes only about 30 m away, but barely visible. The editor reminded us of something that Jim Corbett had written about tigers: When you see a tiger, remember that for every once that you see him, he has seen you 30 times.

And bison. We saw bison on four occasions, but the most impressive view was a solitary bull. Late evening, he stopped about 30 m away to look at us. Then he crossed over slowly to the other side of the road. When he was in front of the jeep, he stopped and looked long and hard at us, giving us a classic view head-on- wide nostrils, perfectly symmetrical horns, white stockinged feed: massive, shining, sleek and in excellent health.

There was no mystery about what he was thinking of us. Cowardly intruders, he was saying, coming to gawk at me. Why don't you get out of the jeep and face me, man to man? Then I'll show you who belongs in this jungle and who doesn't.

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Little Rann Nature Reserve 6 February 1986 by Graham Madge,  
George Hill, Crediton, Devon EX17 2D4, United Kingdom:

After breakfast a taxi was called with driver who knew the conditions under which he would be driving and was willing to go. First birds of note were two black storks. Then we drove past some salt pans with waders including the usual black-winged stilts. This is a very salty area, saline water is pumped from underground to evaporate. Much of the ground is bare and devoid of vegetation. We stopped to look at an eagle perched on the ground quite close. It looked so big I thought it must be a steppe but when it flew off it looked more like a tawny. I knew both well in Zambia and the immature steppes are easy, but that was 12 years ago and one gets out of touch. It was one of those birds one would like to go back and look at again - and that can never be done. This is where a photographer would be so useful, snapping everything and producing pictures which can be studied and argued over!

After driving along tracks and crossing areas with no tracks and seeing one and then several more of the attractively marked, milky looking wild asses which gallop off before you get really near, we parked the car and started to walk with a long stretch of water on our left, with flamingoes, pintail, waders and another new bird identified by Lal - the spotbill duck. I saw these and they had so much more white on them than I remembered in the book, that I just didn't realise what they were. There is said to be a mallard (a rarity!) in the area and Lal wanted to see it but it would have been very difficult to pick out one bird among so many ducks on a long and in places quite wide stretch of water. Our guide spotted three sandgrouse Pterocles exustus which we saw well before they flew off, and a darkish lark which allowed close examination was later identified as rufous-tailed finch lark. We walked on and on with patches of the thorny plant which has become a pest growing on our right. Flocks of short-toed larks flew ahead of us and we must have seen several hundred. Shoveller, gadwall, avocets, spoonbills, greater and lesser flamingoes were on the water but there were no cranes in the roosting area, though they should have been there at that time of day - late mid-morning. It was a long walk and we were glad to get back to the taxi. Drove home by a short cut which actually seemed longer. Next day I enjoyed the luxury of a 'lazy day', relaxing, writing letters and tidying things up. Walked round the area which soon degenerates into poorer type housing with patches of open ground

between, some with wet areas due to ineffective drainage where I saw pond heron and green sandpiper. A purple sunbird visits the flowers in the garden here and koel, collared doves, rosy starlings, rose ringed parakeets and mynas are around, not to mention the ubiquitous house crows found round all areas of human habitation. In the evening Taej Mundkur and Rishad Pravez came in from the university and while we were talking we heard birds calling. 'Cranes!' said Taej, and we nipped out to the balcony and could see demoiselles flying over, lit up from beneath by the city lights.

8 February. We hired a taxi for the day and Taej, Rishad and I set off for the salt works and nature sanctuary at Khijidia about 40 miles away. A red-headed falcon (perhaps red-headed merun - Editor) perched on a post was the best bird seen en route. We had a good look at it - the only one I saw on the whole trip so it does not seem to be common compared with kestrel, of which I must have been about 20 altogether. At Khijidi the water level was low but there were plenty of waders and Taej used a powerful telescope to count them as part of his ornithological studies. There were plenty of the heron family - grey, purple and reef herons and large, smaller and little egrets. Waders included curlew, whimbrel, marsh sandpipers, redshank and spotted ditto (17), black-winged stilts, dunlin and little stints. A nice surprise was four red-necked phalarope on one of the salt pans. We had distant views of 4 common cranes, the first I have seen, and a special bird was a distant black-necked stork, though it looked very unexciting as it squatted, hunched up, on a far bund. I am glad I had good views of this species later on in my visit for it is magnificent when it spreads its wings to fly. Slender-bill gull was a new bird for me and we had good views of purple gallinules. In the distance, where there is still a lot of water at the far end of the sanctuary, we could see a great mass of demoiselles resting.

After our lunch we counted more waders on the extensive salt pans. Over a distant pan, gulls and waders rose and settled again. It was getting late and we did not have time to walk along the narrow, and sometimes, slippery, banks to get to them but a large party of Indian skimmers got up and obligingly flew across in front of us. I have now seen all three Rhynchops - Indian, African and the black skimmer of N.America. Lesser black-backed gulls and black-headed were also seen.



In the morning I saw great reed warblers in the bushes by the path where we walked to count the waders and I had a puzzling Acrocephalus low down in the tall rushes growing in the water. It was like a reed warbler with a distinct supercilium, almost a plain-backed sedge warbler, which suggests paddy field A. agricola. This should have a more rufous shade on the upperparts but I can't recall the precise shade of brown. These warblers are difficult and without getting to know them one can't be sure of the identity from a single sighting. I feel sure it was not Blyth's reed A. dumetorum which I had already seen. It is one of those birds one would like to have in the hand.

9 February. Another quiet day getting ready for departure by train to Mithapur tomorrow. Changed travel cheques at bank. Nitin came with me and we were shown upstairs and had a cup of tea and friendly chat with one of the clerks interested in birds - slower but much more friendly than a modern, ultra efficient English bank where the cheques would be changed at the counter in a couple of minutes.

In the afternoon Nipo and I took an autoriksha to the university campus to look for the painted sandgrouse Taej said were there. (He had been going to fetch me on his motor cycle but didn't turn up because of engine trouble). The university is in a dry area with rough, stony ground and low hills beyond it. We saw desert wheatears, a Richard's pipit and singing bushlark, among other birds. Then Nipo spotted sandgrouse crouching on the ground quite near us. Alas! They were the common chestnut-bellied Pterocles exustus, not the more handsome painted. Back at the university buildings we met Taej and Rishad on the recovered motor cycle and I told him about the grouse which he still thought were painted. Next morning, having checked to make sure, I was going to pull his leg about them but he had forestalled me by checking them himself and greeting me with, 'Those grouse are exustus after all!'.

At the University Taej had pointed out a big tree where various birds roost, just the other side of a little village on the edge of the campus. We walked through the village to a small farm with buildings near the tree. Peafowl were strolling in towards the tree and one of the chaps was busy trying to keep them off one of the crops growing there. I counted 15 and no doubt there were more to come. We saw little cormorants, cattle and little



egrets and one openbill stork fly into the tree and mynas and rosy starlings were collecting nearby, probably making for the same tree. More birds were arriving all the time but we could not stay to see them all in as we had to catch the last bus back to town, so there was no time for coffee with R and T at their hostel. xxxxxxxxx

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Pond Heron Afloat by Prof.K.K.Neelakanthan, Kongalakode, Kavassery P.O., Palghat Dist., Kerala 678 543: More than forty years have passed since I first saw a pond heron floating serenely in the middle of a village pond at Kavassery (Palghat district, Kerala). Thereafter it became so familiar a sight that I took it for granted that authorities such as Whistler, Salim Ali, G.M.Henry et al would have commented on the pond heron's ability to float and even to swim. Only very recently, on seeing a good number of pond herons regularly floating on the surface of a tank in my village (from which I had been absent for three decades), did I bother to check whether the HANDBOOK or any other bird book has mentioned this odd aspect of the pond heron's behaviour. Surprisingly, neither Whistler nor G.M.Henry even hited at it. The HANDBOOK says, 'Observed catching fish by bellyflopping on the water from overhanging stone slab c.1 metre above (Muir, JBNHS 24:366)'.

To me, at any rate, these authorities appear to be guilty of a serious omission. Since no other member of the heron tribe seems to be capable of alighting on water and floating like a duck while the pond heron does it regularly, this aspect of its behaviour should not have been overlooked. Perhaps it is only in my native village that pond herons perform this feat!

When, at the height of summer, sometime in the Nineteen forties, I came across a few pond herons apparently afloat on the surface of a tank, I was so incredulous as to walk into the tank to test its depth and make sure that the birds were not standing in belly-deep water. In those days I used to see pond herons floating in tanks only in the hottest hours of the day. Therefore, I assumed that they were doing so simply in order to cool off.

For nearly 30 years I was out of touch with the pond herons of my village, and it was only this year (1986), when I returned for a long stay in my village that I could resume my observations. Fresh surprises were in store for me, for no longer did our pond herons float in the village tanks in the hot afternoons. Instead, they were doing so in the early hours of the day (6 to 7.30 am) when there was no need to cool off by drenching their plumage. Soon it became clear that they were trying to catch fish.

By February this year my village was in the grip of a severe drought. Most of the tanks in the locality had shrunk into shallow puddles. From sunrise till about 8 am thousands of small fish swam just below the surface, regularly taking in gulps of air apparently swing to the lack of oxygen in the thick, green algal soup the tank held. This, to some 15-20 pond herons which spent the night on the fronds of coconut trees beside the tank was a tantalising sight. They came down to the edge of the tank at dawn and stood about waiting for a chance to snatch up a fish. Half-a-dozen little egrets which were also there waded actively in the shallows and frequently caught fish. But the pond herons, who preferred to stand and wait, were much less successful. Perhaps owing to this, one by one four or five pond herons would fly to the middle of the tank and alight rather clumsily ('bellyflop') on the water.

Even this un-heronlike stratagem does not significantly improve the bird's chances of catching fish, for it takes 5 to 10 minutes for the fish to accept the presence of an enemy in their midst. Moreover, one of the birds standing at the edge of the tank would often come flying and make a pretence of pecking a floating bird, making the latter take off and seek sanctuary in some tree. Now and then, however, a pond heron does manage to snatch up a fish. When it does so, the bird invariably flies with the fish to some tree close by, generally with a crow or a brahminy kite in hot pursuit.

Most of the floating pond herons do not swim; they remain floating at one spot or just drift with the wind. But on the 1st of May I watched one bird alighting on the water which was mirror-smooth and actually swimming three or four feet. As there was no breeze and as the bird changed direction twice while moving quite fast, I believe that it was actually swimming.

P.S. Early in the morning on 3 May it rained for an hour. On that day, perhaps because the water was cool and held enough oxygen, not many fish swam near the surface. Consequently, no pond heron was seen floating in the tank.

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Birds of Dharwad and Hubli by Dr.J.C. Uttanqi, 56/1, Mission Compound, Dharwad-1: In a recent article published by me on Bird fauna in the urban habitats of Hubli and Dharwad ('My Forest' journal Vol.21(3) pp 151-161 of September 1985) an account of nearly 80 species of birds belonging to 50 different families is given. The paper deals with the distribution and classification of the more conspicuous urban breeding residents such as local mynas, crows, pigeons, house-sparrows, kites, herons and egrets etc; and the winter visitors to these areas such as wagtails, small green bee-eaters, black-drongos, shrikes, snipes, stilts, ducks and raptors as well as the less conspicuous semi-urban summer breeding forest and garden species like the melodious magpie-robin, bushchat, bulbul, iora, white-eye, golden-oriole, minivets, parakeets, lorikeets and other similar song birds. In the present article a short account is given of all those birds which at one time were prevalent in these localities but got affected due to habitat destruction. Thanks to the Editor, for inducing me to write this article.

During the days when there was no apparent danger to the local forest vegetation the country side of Hubli and especially of Dharwad city, rightly called the chota mahabaleshwar looked shady green and cool. Hubli is hotter and more open country. The scrub-grass filled thorny jungle with scattered forest trees typical of these areas attracted for many years varieties of song birds and migrating water and marsh birds to the local tanks. Up till 1940, these undisturbed areas presented an appearance of a natural sanctuary having a rich bird fauna butterflies, insects, luna moths and rare animals like chameleon and ant-eater. But all this changed rapidly after independence.

The little brown-dove (Streptopelia senegalensis) which constantly frequented the roofs and nested in the patches of the prickly pear plant (Opuntia dillenii) located in the area between the Karnataka College and Collector's compound, disappeared soon after this plant



died away in 1950. In the town the bird was shot by airgun and catapult. Likewise the spotted-dove (Streptopelia chinensis) met the same fate. The green pigeon (Treron phoenicoptera) is another bird which received the same treatment as it came to feed regularly on the fruits of Banyan trees along the Poona-Bangalore National High way. The tree-pie (Dendrocitta vagabunda) and the Jerdon's leaf-bird (Chloropsis cochinchinensis) which also fed in these areas on blossoming flowers of silk cotton trees around college campus have left the area for good due to much disturbance and tree cutting. Two other rare birds that need particular mention here are 1) the Indian pitta (Pitta brachyura) and 2) the golden backed wood-pecker (Dinopium benghalenses). They were shot for their beautifully coloured feathers. The former visited the Botanical gardens in winter regularly. It has not come back and needs to be rediscovered. The latter however, disappeared as soon as the wooded habitats were cleared for housing quarters. The Malabar pied horn bill (Anthracoceros coronatus) in a noisy family of 3-4 birds used to appear in the Mission compound area during 1940's but, today only the common grey hornbill (Tockus birostris) is seen feeding in the banyan trees. These trees must be protected. Not surprisingly the white-browed bulbul (Pycnonotus luteolus) which I last saw and heard in 1975 at Barakotri lantana shrubbery has now disappeared due to the cutting down of this shrub by the nomadic tribes for fuel. The bird has moved away further into the undisturbed forest areas. The common quail (Coturnix coturnix) and the grey-partridge (Francolinus poudicerianus) sheltered in the tall grass of the hunting grounds at Chotamahabaleshwar have disappeared from the area where the university buildings and staff quarters were now erected. Everything considered the population and variety of bird life in Dharwad and Hubli is not too discouraging. What needs to be done for their survival is the planting of fruit and flowering trees.

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The Indian Pitta by Ranjit R.J. Daniels, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore:  
Anyone will agree with me if I said that the Indian Pitta is the most colourful of birds we see around us. I have even heard people call it 'Navratna' and claim that it has nine colours on it! Though so spectacular and quite popular, very little is known about the pitta generally. The name 'pitta' is most probably of Telugu origin which means a 'small bird'. This term has also become a 'surname' for some New World birds namely, the Antpittas, belonging to the family Formicariidae.

One definitely puzzling behaviour of the pitta is its Migration. It is known to fly southward as far as Sri Lanka during winter. However not all birds seem to do so as we see pittas scattered all over the peninsula during winter. Some are certainly in a hurry to reach their southern destinies and therefore are not seen in the place after a few days. Some do stay back on different parts of the peninsula and overwinter. The Indian pitta breeds in the Himalayas and in parts of Central India. There are reports of it breeding in Northern Karnataka too.

Here I would like to make mention of some curious observations that I have made on this bird. On the campus of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, the pitta is a regular winter visitor. Birds are generally noticable October onwards. What first caught my attention was a bunch of Pitta feathers under a tree on the campus in 1983. It was indeed a harbinger of the birds' presence on the campus. The next day I saw one fly up into a tree not far from where I had collected the feathers. It was obvious to me that a few birds had arrived on the campus and at least one had already fallen prey to what I believe was a hawk. This has now been observed by me quite consistently during the years that have followed the year of my first observation. This year, during this season alone, I have come across three such bunches of feathers in different places on the campus and still there's a bird that I hear sing out its last song for the day just outside my department!

Pittas are generally very alert and secretive birds. Being ground feeders they are always under cover of some thicket. Yet, the hawks (mostly shikras) seem to get them with less trouble than any other bird of that size. But why?

The only answer that I can think of is that the birds are diseased. I have, in my hometown (Nagercoil) twice caught Indian Pittas, that were in my garden and unable to fly. They tried to run away rather than fly and hence I caught them. In captivity they fed well on earthworms and were quite tame. However, after three days the birds died. They had probably tried to take a last drink and hence were stiff near the water bowl. These are observations made at different times. I was convinced that the birds were diseased, they showed signs of constipation and the excreta would dry around the cloaca making the bird stink. I have even tried cleaning them with hot water. It didn't help.

It is likely that many of the birds migrating southward carry this particular disease and stop here and there unable to fly further. These are the ones falling easy prey to the hawks. What proportion of birds die like this each year is hard to guess. However it would be worthwhile if someone who finds such a diseased bird dead or alive sends it to the veterinary department to find out the causal pathogen and further details of the disease.

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### Correspondence

Black Ibis Roosting on electric poles by J.F.Dodia and B.M.Parasharya AICRP on Economic Ornithology, Gujarat Agricultural University, Anand 388110: While returning from Tarapur (Kheda district) on January 8, 1986, we observed eight black ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*) on a tall electric pole on the roadside. At 1835 hours, the sun had already set, and the ibises were occasionally calling in typical fashion. They all seemed set for roosting on this giant artificial structure. To confirm whether they actually roosted there, we waited there till it became completely dark. And we confirmed our presumption they remained there.

We were surprised because the black ibis usually roost on old giant trees. They are part of a single or multi species communal roost. Usually the birds select the largest trees in the vicinity, probably because such trees are safer than the shorter trees. But selection of a giant electric pole for roosting might be an adaptive

response of the birds to its abnormal height. One of us (B.M.P.) has also observed this ibis nesting on a television antennae at Rajkot. There, the ibises are very common even in the urban area, and this suggests that the ibises are highly adaptive to the changing environment.

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Bustards by A.R.Rahmani, Project Scientist, Endangered Species Project, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay 400 023: The great bustard is perhaps the most well-known endangered birds of the country. Since 1981 the BNHS is studying this species in detail and a large amount of data has been collected. Atleast ten bustard sanctuaries/reserves were established in recent years. Fortunately the population of the great Indian Bustard is increasing in some places. However, there is still more work to be done before this beautiful bird is out of danger.

The lesser florican and the Bengal florican are also now greatly threatened mainly due to destruction of habitat. Till now practically no attention has been given to the grasslands where the bustards live. We think the grassland ecosystem is the most threatened habitat in India.

The wintering population of the houbara has also been reduced drastically. During a recent one month survey in early 1986, we saw only 23 houbaras in three districts of western Rajasthan. In addition to suffering at the hands of Arab falconers in Pakistan, local Indian hunters also take a heavy toll of houbara. We actually saw a jeep-load of poachers going after the houbaras on 23 January 1986 near Diyatra in Bikaner district.

I think, the time has come to form a pressure group for the Indian bustards. Tentatively, it is named as Indian Bustard Group. The Group will be based in the BNHS.

The main objectives of this Group will be:

- a) To create more awareness about the plight of the Indian bustards.
- b) To collect and disseminate information about bustards of India.

- c) To act as a liaison between various people interested in Indian bustards.
- d) To motivate governments/departments to conserve bustards and their habitats.

Newsletter: A cyclostyled newsletter of four pages, quarterly or six monthly will be brought out covering news about bustards of India. Initially, publication and postage charges will be covered by the Endangered Species Project of the BNHS. Once the project is over, other avenues for funding the newsletter will be searched.

Though membership will be open to all, preference will be given to people who are actively involved in conservation activities.

This is the first circular in this regard. Your comments and suggestion will help us in concretizing the idea to establish a Bustard Group in India.

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Armchair birdwatching by Ketan S. Tatu, 4/21, Azad Apartments, Ambavadi, Ahmedabad - 15: Mr. Lavkumar Khacher's 'Armchair Birdwatching' published in the back issues was very interesting and gave new ideas about this hobby.

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Snowy Owl just after Fall at Tanglu by Rathin Mukherjee and Suvendu Sekhar Saha, Zoological Survey of India, Solan, Himachal Pradesh 173212: On our way to Phalut, Sandakhpu, we set camp at Tanglu on the Singalila Ridge Crest which extends from Manebhanjang in the South towards Sikkim in the North.

No sooner had we arrived at mid day, there was a sudden fall of snow and within a short while the whole area was covered with a thick layer of snow. Then, to our amazement, we notice trails of hares all around us. There were the trails of 'wooly hares'. These hares are supposed to occur in the higher altitudes of Darjeeling and in the Himalayas and so we intended to capture a few specimens for investigation.

After a short rest Suvendu and I ventured out again with Suvendu scanning the area with his torch light to



look for 'wooly hares'. Just then I saw something which seemed to be hopping across the snow. On peering closer we discovered it to be a 'snowy owl', which was identified by Suvendu as *Strix aluco*. Probably it was searching for moles or other rodents in the snow to feed on.

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Identifying Tereks Sandpiper by V. Santharam, 68, I Floor, Santhome High Road, Madras 600 028: The Editor, in the January-February 1986 issue of the NLBW wanted comments on the field identification of the Terek Sandpiper. As one familiar with the species which is a fairly common winter visitor to the Adyar Estuary and other suitable localities around Madras, I thought I should write a few words. I hope this note would be of some help to those interested in identifying this species.

This sandpiper is slightly larger than the common sandpiper (*I. hypoleucos*) but smaller than the redshank (*I. totanus*). The most distinct feature of this species is the long, tapering upcurved black beak with a yellow base. In good lighting conditions, the beak can by itself be a good pointer to the identification of this species. The legs are short and coloured yellow or orangish-yellow and not red. (Perhaps in the yellow evening light, the leg colour might appear brighter).

Flight patterns are useful and, in certain cases, critical in the field identification of waders. In the case of the terek, the white trailing edge of the wings is a good clue. There is no flashy white rump or upper-tail coverts, though the rump is generally paler than the back in winter.

In winter, the bird has uniform greyish upperparts and white underparts. A whitish supercilium and forehead are also present. There is also a black shoulder patch but this not easily seen except in good light. In summer, the upper parts turn browner and the markings on breast become more distinct. There is also a distinct black 'V' shaped mark across the back, on the scapulars.

The calls have been described as 'sharp whistled wit-e-wit' or 'a rapid, loud, high-pitched shrill whinny, tee-tee-tee orti-ti'. I have frequently heard its calls in winter, especially in flight and find the calls distinct and useful in identifying the bird. Like its cousin, the

common sandpiper, the terek also bobs up and down. The terek is more of a bird of the coastal areas and seen feeding at the water's edge on mudflats and seashore, actively running about while feeding. Its occurrence in the inland areas may coincide with its migration.

In my opinion, the terek sandpiper can pose little problems to the careful birdwatchers and it is highly unlikely that it could be confused with any other species.

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Clues for identifying Warblers by M.B.Krishna, No.10, Ranga Rao Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore 560 004: Warblers in general are shy by nature and this is especially true of Blyth's Reed and Booted Tree Warblers. Their shy nature combined with similar looks, calls and habits makes it difficult to differentiate between these species in the field. Both are small, plain olive brown and buffish white warblers, which are more often heard than seen. The loud 'tchek', 'tek' or 'chuck' call repeated continuously with a 'churr' thrown in now and then often gives away their presence before the birds themselves are seen. So, the best way to see them is to stay still and wait, rather than try to follow or approach them which would surely make them sulk.

A few points have been considered here which might be of some help in distinguishing between these two oft confused species in the field.

Blyth's Reed Warbler is larger than the Tree Warbler and is almost two centimetres longer than the latter. In shape, the body looks more elongated with the legs placed midway. The beak is almost as long as the head and the eyes are placed more towards the beak. The crown peak is much sharper (angular) and lies well behind the position of the eye. The tail is relatively longer and is rounded in shape.

In contrast, Booted Tree Warbler is about two centimetres shorter in overall length with the body appearing more plump. It is more 'Phylloscopine' in shape with the legs placed farther back, beyond half of the body. Consequently it seems to sit more upright. The beak is shorter than the head with the eyes placed farther back. The distance of the eyes from the base of the beak is roughly equal to the length of the beak itself. The

crown peak is above or just behind the eye and the head looks more rounded in shape. The tail also looks more like that of a leaf-warbler; it is square or just rounded at the corners. (The illustration on page 118, vol. 8 of the Handbook shows a fork in the tail, although the description of the bird mentions a square-ended tail).

Perhaps the most characteristic difference would be in the length of the undertail coverts. In Blyth's Reed Warbler it extends to about two thirds of the tail whereas in Booted Tree Warbler it is only about a third in length. It is this short length of the undertail coverts that gives the characteristic almost abrupt tapering shape to the Hippolais warblers.

Summing up, the essential points of difference discernable in the field would lie in the size, body shape, relative beak length, crown peak, position of the eye, tail shape and undertail coverts.

Readers of the newsletter might like to comment on these points since different observers tend to perceive and note the characters differently. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Joseph George, who gave his invaluable suggestions for improving the manuscript, but for whose encouragement and insistence I would not have written this note.

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### आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में छात्रों को दोपहर का मुफ्त भोजन :-

आदिम जाति कल्याण विभाग द्वारा संचालित शालाओं के छात्रों को दिया जा रहा दोपहर का मुफ्त भोजन प्रदेश के सभी आदिवासी इलाकों के स्कूली छात्रों को देने का निर्णय। इस कार्यक्रम का लाभ चार लाख बच्चों को मिलेगा।

मध्यप्रदेश में हरिजनों और आदिवासियों की भलाई के कार्यक्रमों के लिए सातवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में छठी योजना की तुलना में दो गुन्नी राशि का प्रावधान।

आदिम जाति कल्याण के कार्यों में राज्य आयोजना केन्द्र प्रवर्तित योजना, केन्द्रीय योजनाओं और विशेष केन्द्रीय सहायता प्राप्त योजनाओं पर सातवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में रुपये 160.74 करोड़ का प्रावधान। छठी योजना में इन कार्यों में रुपये 83.26 करोड़ व्यय हुए।

हरिजन विशेषांश योजना के तहत सातवीं योजना में रु. 413 करोड़ की राशि का प्रावधान। छठी योजना में हरिजन विशेषांश योजना के अन्तर्गत लगभग रुपये 184 करोड़ का व्यय हुआ।

सातवीं योजना में प्रदेश के सभी आदिवासी विकास गण्डों में एकीकृत बाल विकास कार्यक्रम लागू।

प्रदेश में पहली बार आदिवासी युवतियों के लिए नई तकनीकी प्रशिक्षण संस्थाएं खोलने का निर्णय।

योजनाओं का लाभ गरीबों को झोपड़ियों तक पहुंचाने के प्रयास।

Front Cover: THE MASKED BOOBY (Sula Dactylatra)

Courtesy K. S. HARSHVARDHANA BHAT

Editor: Zafar Futehally

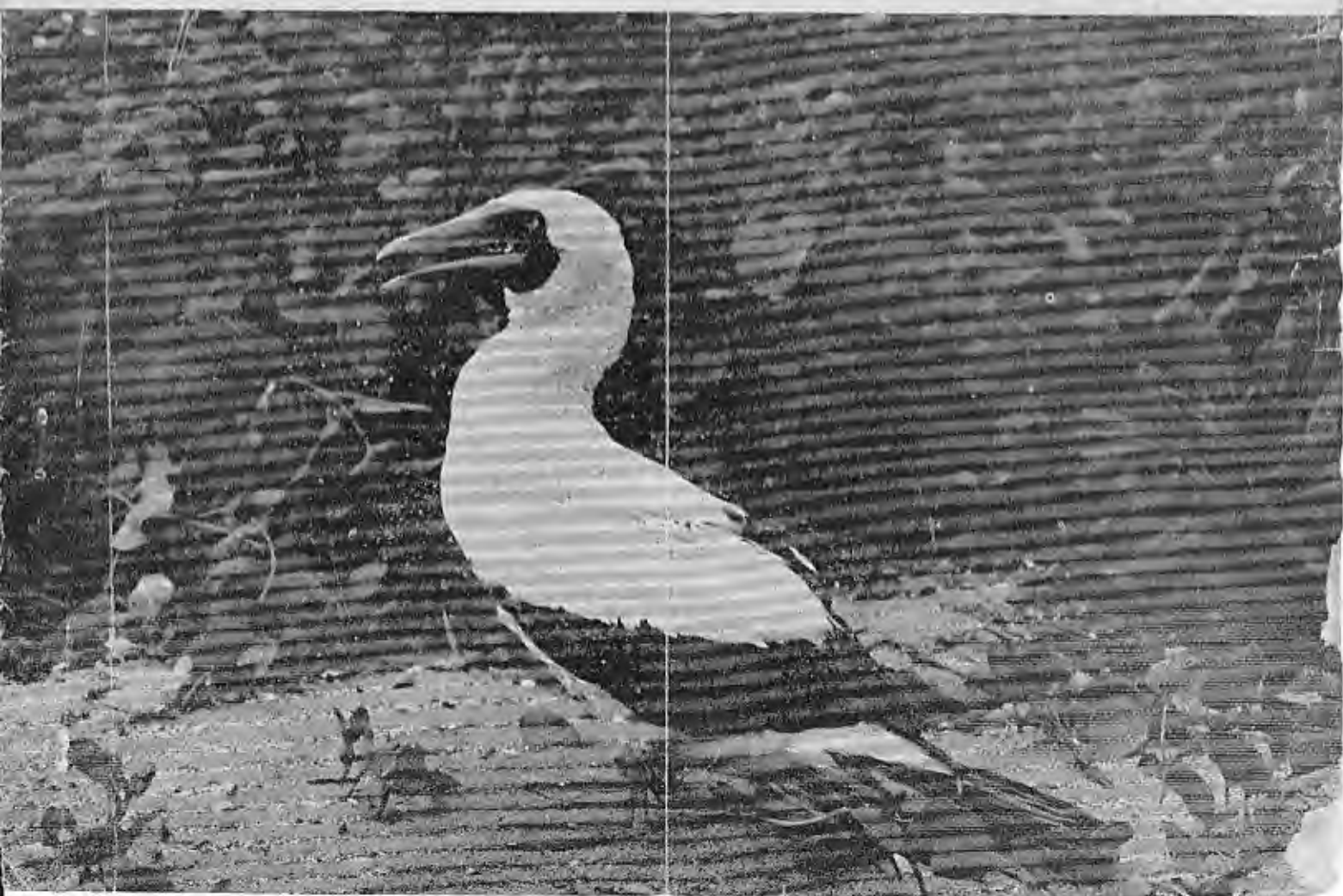
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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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NEWSLETTER  
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A Talk with Salim Ali about where do we go from here:

During a recent meeting with Salim Ali I discussed the kind of projects which Members of our Newsletter could undertake. Many of our readers have now become competent in identifying species. This of course is the first step, and Salim Ali suggested that the following aspects of bird life could now be studied.

1. Pollination of Flowers

This is a fascinating subject and the Institute of Paleobotany in Lucknow could be contacted for identification of pollen to find out which species of flowers are involved. Some birds are very specific in this matter. Some flowers can only be pollinated by a few species of birds.

2. The Food of Birds

For this it is necessary to kill and dissect birds, but even if this is not desirable, careful observation can provide an answer to what the bird is feeding on, particularly during the nesting stage.

3. Condition of Habitat

Careful daily notes about bird species seen, and changes in the habitat over a period of time, can result in very worthwhile findings. Speaking about Pali Hill, Salim Ali said that there used to be a large number of white browed bulbuls in the early fifties and sixties. But with the increase of urbanization these bulbuls were one of the first to disappear, while some other species, like magpie robbins for example, continue to survive.

4. Memory Untrustworthy

Do not trust memory, but take notes on the spot. Salim Ali recounted an interesting example of how useful careful note taking can be. In a recent visit to Simlipal in Orissa with Dillon Ripley, both of them were rather surprised at the poor population of birds, and Ripley thought that he could write a note about it based on his suspicion of deteriorating ecological condition being the main factor. However, when Salim Ali checked up his notes about the area, he found that he had specifically made a mention of its poor bird life even several decades ago. If this note had not been available, Ripley might have been tempted to produce an explanation for the alleged depletion.

Salim Ali is particularly anxious to impress on all birdwarchers the importance of integrity. A statement made on the basis of inadequate observation can lead to very misleading results. He referred to the instance of a grey tit being 'sighted' by Dr. Suffern the Assistant Editor of Lancet, the prestigious journal published in England. Suffern was in the Air-Force during the war and was stationed at Chembur. One day he reported the 'sighting' of a grey tit in the locality. Salim was very surprised because he was familiar with the area and had never seen a grey tit in Chembur. Dr. Suffern, however insisted that the bird was a grey tit. But after two months he came back to Salim and confessed that the bird was not a grey tit, but an iora. The confusion was caused by the fact that in England the grey tit during the breeding season has yellow under parts just like our ioras.

So, if we have to take a step forward and graduate from bird watchers to ornithologists, we must commence taking careful on the spot notes of what we observe. A good idea is to have a bird ledger, one page for each species, with the following headings as in the Handbook of British Birds by K.H.F. Witherby and others.

Habitat  
Field Character and General Habits  
Voice  
Display and Posturing  
Breeding  
Food  
Distribution  
Migration  
Distribution Abroad  
Description - adult      winter  
Summer - nestling - juvenile  
First winter and summer, measurements  
Characters and forms  
Hybrids

There is much to be learnt about the life histories even of our commonest birds. Some years ago when Leslie brown was working on birds of prey he wrote: 'I cannot find anywhere a properly detailed account of the nesting of that common bird the Brahminy Kite, though my scant observations have indicated that only the female incubates, and that she is fed on the nest by the male'. Will some of our readers take up a study of the Brahminy kite?

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Birdwatching in Goa by S.Rangaswami and Hari Vivek:

A word about us at the outset may not be out of place. We are a grandfather - grandson team and together we have done many hours of enjoyable and educative birdwatching in places like Rishi Valley (1976-77), in and around Erandwana, Pune (1978-80), Gulbarga (1981) and Goa (1982-86). During the last four years and more, during Feb/March, we have done quite a bit of serious and sustained birdwatching in Goa's Pythona village located in Parvorim area, about a kilometre from Defence Colony. We chose this area for our bird studies not only due to its proximity to our house but also to the ideal forest habitat that the village has. We knew that our joint outings this year would be the last in Goa. So we decided to do some strenuous observation in the densely wooded area of Pythona village. This we did on 22nd, 23rd and 25th Feb. 1986 from 6.30 am to 11.00 am. We had with us our Canon Binoculars (7x50) and the 'Pictorial Guide' (BNHS Centenary Pubn.).

Pythona village has forest coverage to the extent of about 4 sq.km. (or a little less) and the terrain is very uneven with many crests and troughs. It is sparsely populated. So human intrusion is minimal. It has all the characteristics of tropical rain forests. There are trees in plenty -- big and small, deciduous and evergreen with some giants here and there towering above the rest, but all of them providing a pleasing and continuous canopy of foliage and also flowers and fruits according to the season. As could be expected, a good many trees are buttressed and festooned with lianas and overgrowths like clumps of Loranthus and other epiphytes are found in profusion. Among the trees we could identify teak, santalum, jack (heavy with fruits all over), jamun, varieties of ficus with plenty of small, succulent berries, the most conspicuous of all being silk-cotton (both Salmalia and Bombax) and Coral trees (Erythrina). These trees were providing an assemblage point for a multitude of nectar feeders since they were all in bloom. To add to this arboreal luxuriance we have all over the jungle dense undergrowth of bushes almost impenetrable in some places. Human intrusion is confined to the cashew plantations that girdle the forest all round to a depth of 20 to 30 metres. For avid and ardent birdwatchers there cannot be a more promising location for feasting their eyes and ears with the enthralling beauty that the avifauna of Pythona village offers. As a whole this particular pocket of forest land does not



seem to have undergone any serious habitat disturbance during the last several decades. It is little wonder that Pythona village teems with bird life, its natural forest serving as a focal point for several species of birds and offering them plentiful supply of food all the year round in the form of fruits, seeds, insects and nectar.

The first avian friends to greet us were two pale brown shrikes and two white cheeked bulbuls from their perch on telegraph wires. As we entered the jungle at 6.30 am on 22 Feb. we heard the noisy reverberations of the full throated, persistent K-U-T-R-O-O calls of large green barbets coming from all directions and the noisy cackle of the white browed bulbuls coming from the bushes close by. For about 45 minutes we kept a watch on the behaviour of the birds which had thronged the cluster of silk-cotton and coral trees some 50 ft. away. There were dozens of crows making crude attempts to get at the nectar of the flowers and our discomfiture was ended only when dozens of black drongos descended on these trees and chased the crows away as if to warn them that with their indiscriminating taste for all kinds of food, from the purest to the most putrid, they could go to the carbage of Goa leaving the nectar to the birds which know the value of nectare and have a preference for it. Two pairs of crimson breasted barbets also joined and confined themselves to the periphery. One of the pairs found the location more congenial for mating than for foraging. The male would fly some distance, return with tiny figs in his beak, thrust it into the mouth of his partner and mount her. The understanding among the partners appeared perfect. No other bird had the temerity to come near the coral and silk-cotton trees so long as the drongos were there. But as soon as they left, flocks of rosy pastors congregated and messed up the flowers while drinking the nectar. A good many babblers, mostly of the rufous variety, red-vented bulbuls and red-cheeked bulbuls also joined the fray. The calls of the bulbuls got drowned in the noise and din that prevailed and by now all the flowers must have been sucked dry of their nectar. Two magpie robins came and left soon, finding the atmosphere uncongenial. Above us, we could see green bee-eaters making sallies in the air and catching their victims in flight. A group of little egrets flew past far above with pursuits of their own in haunts totally different. It was nearing 8 am and we thought it was time we moved to some other spot.



Just then we found some peculiar bird-movement in the interior of the dense mass of scrub made up of lantana, carissa and zizyphus bushes interspersed with creepers affecting visibility. We spotted a biggish bird a little bigger than mynah, flitting about silently and sulkily as if it preferred concealment. It appeared very much like a coucal in form as well as movements and was of dull green plumage with a bright green beak and what was more arresting, a distinct, circular, white band round the iris. The tail feathers were long like those of a coucal and were white tipped. The bird made no calls and was single. For a while we could observe him more minutely through our binoculars. But it vanished soon. Since we had not seen the like of such a bird before we glanced through the pages of the Pictorial Guide and got the clue that it could be the small greenbilled malkoha (Plate 52). Reference to the Handbook later confirmed this (Entry No.595). We hope we are right. We moved a little to the interior of the forest and came to a spot which was like the bottom of a trough about 40 ft. deep and 80 ft. wide, surrounded as it was by long stretches of sloping, heavily wooded terrain. A well in a state of disuse had water hardly six feet below. The bushy undergrowth was varied and of rich green. The usual coral and silk-cotton trees were there. But there were also some varieties of ficus and these were centres of attraction for all varieties of bulbuls - redvented, white cheeked and red-whiskered, coppersmiths, orioles and two pairs of Jerdon's Chloropsis. Troops of 'Sisterhoods' -- the babblers were all over the place and we could spot three distinct species -- the Rufous babbler, large grey babbler and the common babbler. But one thing that struck us most was the very large number of drongos, both black and white-bellied, we saw here and the confident airs they were assuming keeping the entire area resonant with their varied notes. It became evident that this was drongo territory. It was nearing 10.30 am and the sun was getting fierce. So we called it a day and returned home with the idea of returning to this very spot early next morning because of the promise it held for us, specially for feasting our ears with the fine and varied melodies the air of the place was charged with. While walking back we heard the repeated calls of the golden-backed woodpecker and the tree-pie -- a strange blend of the musical and the harsh -- and this further strengthened our desire to get back to this lovely spot in which the drongos appeared to predominate and seemed not only to tolerate but also enjoy the company of several other varieties of birds. Fine co-existence indeed!

On 25 Feb we returned to this spot before 7.00 am and had come prepared with snacks and tea so that we could stay for a little longer. A magpie-robin perched right on top of a tall coral tree was pouring forth sweet and shrill notes as if to prove his skill and creativity. To our utter delight we spotted three racket-tailed drongos in another coral tree nearby, sucking nectar from the flowers which had just blossomed. They would bend down in the process and at such moments their wire like extensions of the marginal tail feathers ending in racket-like designs were clearly visible and it was a beautiful sight which will linger long in our memory. We heard no calls from them. But they remained at this spot for very nearly half an hour exhibiting their special charm which was further enhanced by the gloss of their plumage as the morning sun's rays fell on them. We realized how very apt it is on the part of the authors of Mitchell Beazley's 'The World Atlas of Birds' when they brand the racket-tailed drongo as 'a true exhibitionist'. This very same book also speaks of the association between these birds and other birds like the tree-pie, the woodpecker etc. For some time we could not spot any of these and were hearing only their calls every now and then. After closely following the direction of the call we could see the woodpecker for a few seconds. It appeared quite a restless bird. The tree-pie eluded us all the time. There were many other birds of equally arresting beauty close by and we could follow their movements and hear their calls. Two pairs of golden orioles, one blackheaded oriole, three coppersmiths, the magpie robin already spoken of, any number of black and white bellied drongos, purple and purple rumped sun birds, two pairs of Chloropsis, a few Ioras - all these birds we could see flitting or darting about actively but confining themselves to this area only and were singing all the while, as if taking part in a grand orchestra. Now and then a few unmelodious sounds could also be heard like the tooting of the large green barbets or the shrieks of a shikra. Small flocks of blossom headed as well as roseringed parakeets would fly in, settle down for a while and take to flight.

Reluctantly we moved to the outskirts of the forest to spot some more birds in the scrub jungle which appeared to be full of moths and bees and beetles. A gentle tug at one of the lianas brought down a shower of red ants and we had to jump off to a safer spot. Here we saw one sub-adult male Paradise fly catcher flitting about to catch his prey. He had a fairly long rufous tail and

was yet to go through the final moult to transform himself in appearance and gain his adult grandeur with shiny white plumage and long streamers. We were sure that his partner was around since we could hear its unmusical, short squeaks. But we failed to locate her. Many babblers were rummaging among heaps of dry leaves and kept up a continual low chatter and the insects that took to air on being disturbed by the babblers served as ideal targets for the male flycatcher and a few drongos nearby. A pair of small minivets could be seen hopping from branch to branch a few feet away. We missed on all the three days the Malabar whistling thrush a pair of which we had seen on many earlier occasions and had heard their shrill, sweet whistle notes.

Thus ended our birdwatching session -- our last in Goa -- and the most profitable session we have had so far and also the most memorable.

A check-list of the birds mentioned in this article is given below in alphabetical order with their scientific names:

1. Babbler-Rufus	<i>Turdoides subrufus</i>
2. Babbler-Jungle	<i>Turdoides straitus</i>
3. Babbler-Common	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>
4. Barbet Large green	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
5. Barbet crimson breasted	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
6. Bee-eater-common	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
7. Bulbul redvented	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
8. Bulbul red whiskered	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
9. Bulbul white cheeked	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>
10. Bulbul white browed	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
11. Chloropsis - Jerdon's	<i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i>
12. Crows - jungle	<i>Corvus macrorhynus</i>
13. Drongo black	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
14. Drongo white bellied	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
15. Drongo greater racket tailed	<i>-do- paradiseus</i>
16. Egret little	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
17. Flycatcher paradise	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
18. Iora common	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
19. Magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
20. Malkoha small green billed	<i>Rhopodytes viridiostri</i>
21. Minivet small	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
22. Oriole black-headed	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
23. -do- golden	<i>-do- oriolus</i>
24. Parakeet rose ringed	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>



25. Parakeet blossom headed	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
26. Rosy pastor	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>
27. Shrike Plae brown	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>
28. Sunbird purple	<i>Nectarina asiatica</i>
29. Sunbird purple rumped	<i>Nectarina zeylonica</i>
30. Tree pie Indian	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
31. Woodpecker Golden backed	<i>Dinopium javanense</i>

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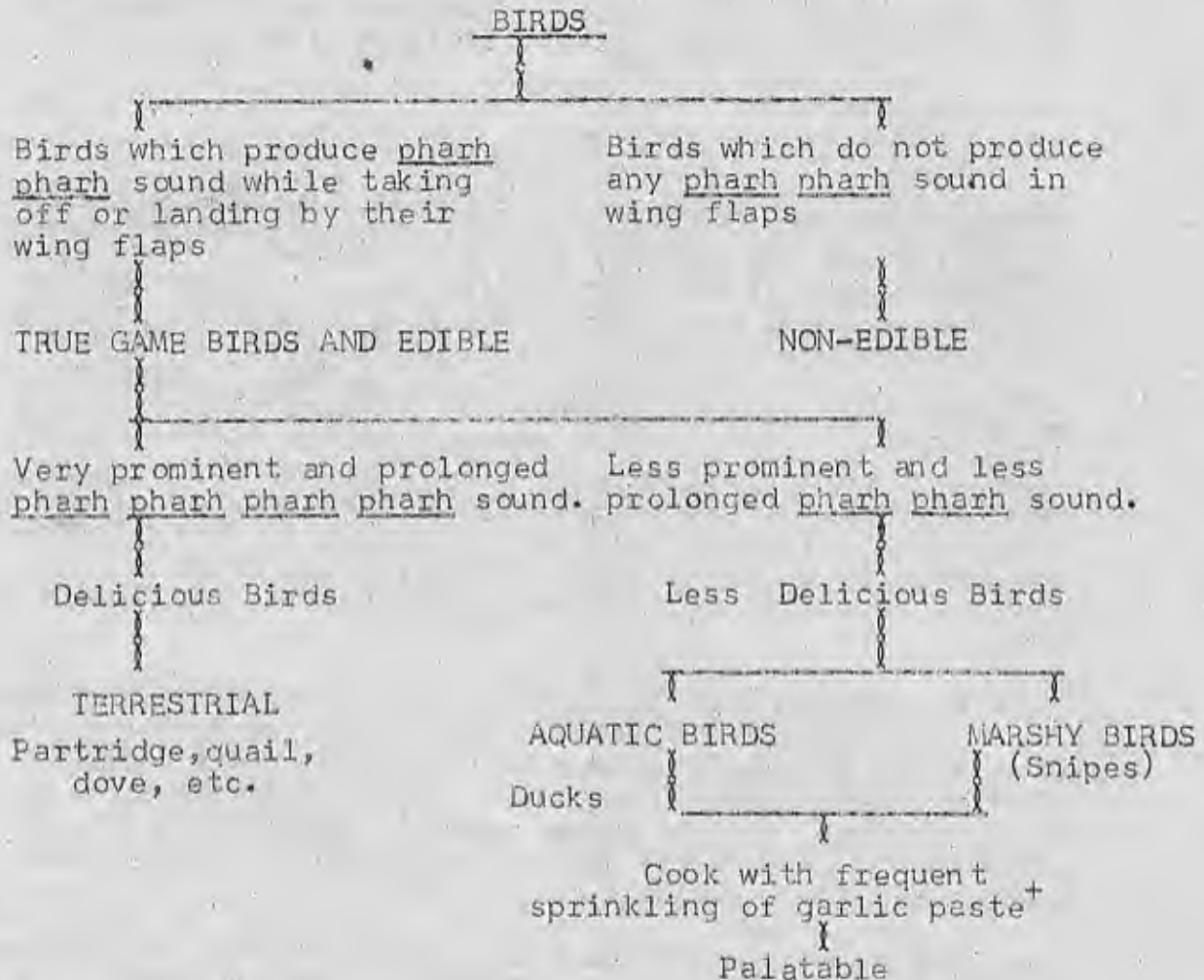
Key to edible and non edible birds by V.G.Prasad, 51, Maruthi Nilaya, 3rd Floor, Temple Street, Malleswaram, Bangalore 560003: Since the publication of a 'Manual of Game Birds of India' parts I and II, by E.W.Oates, towards the end of last century, many birds have become extinct or rare and hunting has become restricted. However, interest in game continues. Therefore, I feel, my observations will interest game-lovers as I wish to provide them a simple field key to distinguish between edible and non-edible birds. I must clarify here that, I am not encouraging hunting, but this information should be treated as of academic and field interest, especially to avoid indiscriminate shooting of useful birds, which God has created and serve as predators, scavengers, pollinators etc.

All birds have characteristic flight and wing-flaps, in the process of which they may or may not produce sounds. Game birds generally edible are the ones which usually have shorter flights, and noisy wing-flaps producing a typical pharh, pharh, pharh sound. Birds which do not produce this sound are generally non-edible like crows, vultures, kites, eagles, owls, etc.

Now among the edible birds there are two categories: First, produces a more prominent Pharh pharh sound, while taking off and landing, and are invariably terrestrial birds like quails, partridges, pigeons, pheasants, wild fowls, doves, etc. These are mostly ground feeders with exceptions like the green pigeon, and are very delicious. Second, produce less prominent pharh pharh sound, and are invariably aquatic birds like ducks, teals, snipes and other water fowls. These are relatively less delicious, but can be made more palatable by roasting it in cooking oil with frequent sprinkling of watery garlic paste to remove their undesirable smell (heek) and then cooking it with onion and masala.



Based on the observations stated above, it is now possible to generally distinguish between edible and non-edible birds at a field level and this is summarized below:



<sup>+</sup> Details given in the text

Bird edibility in a true sense, or from game point of view is neither a matter of choice nor taste, but the convention is well established all over the world since time immemorial but it needed an explanation as to how to distinguish, at a field level edible from non-edible birds. There may be some exceptions to this general rule, I am propounding, on account of many factors, including the eating of certain birds like crows, parakeets, sparrows, etc. due to a regional trait, or more out of

necessity or poverty. I have written this article not to encourage hunting but for the sake of telling your readers that a possibility exists to have a small field key drawn out for game birds. As I have not come across any such key in literature, I hope this will be much of interest and of practical value to avoid indiscriminate shooting of birds as these are part of our society to play an important role in the environment.

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An unusual nest site for the large pied wagtail by Douglas A. Bell, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and Dept. of Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, California USA 94720: The following account of what might be an unusual nest site for the large pied wagtail Motacilla maderaspatensis is presented in the hope that it may help to further clarify nesting requirements in this species.

On April 25, 1982 a nest of Motacilla maderaspatensis containing 3 nearly-fledged young was located underneath a small water tank on the roof of a 3-story residential house in Besant Nagar, Madras. The water tank was entirely enclosed except for an overflow pipe which opened onto an outer wall of the house at a point just below the roof. All other houses in the residential neighbourhood had similar rooftop, enclosed water tanks. The nearest open fresh water source was a tank located at least 0.7 km away. The only source of fresh water in the immediate vicinity of the nest then, was the water supplied by the overflow pipe. Overflowing occurred about twice a day and lasted at most a couple of minutes each time. Other tanks in the neighbourhood overflowed at about the same rate. Overflowing water from the tanks did not collect into puddles on the ground, but instead seeped immediately into sandy soil.

The adults were often observed foraging on lawns and rooftops about the house. Foraging did not seem to coincide with overflowing water tanks, nor did the birds change any specific behaviour patterns during such overflows. Rather, they continued with the given behaviour of the moment (i.e., singing or calling by the male, preening, feeding, etc.). From the above, it appeared that the birds were not directly using tank overflows for foraging.

It has generally been assumed that the large pied wagtail selects nest sites in close proximity to water (see for example, Ali and Ripley, 1973). In the nesting instance reported here, direct use of the water source by the birds was not observed. However, it is possible that irregular inundation of the soil at tank overflows, watering of lawns and similar suburban activities produced a foraging arena suitable to the wagtails. In a study of food habitats in common Indian birds, Mathew, et al (1980) mentioned the large pied wagtail's foraging preference for muddy fields and wet grassy areas. The presence of an overflow pipe that provided an itinerate 'trickle' of water may have been an adequate stimulus, enticing the birds to settle on a roof top far away from any permanent water source.

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Mathew, D.N., T.C. Narendran and V.J. Zacharias (1980): A comparative study of the feeding habits of certain species of Indian birds affecting agriculture. J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc., 75 (suppl.): 1178-1197.

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Birdwatching in the Mundanthurai Wildlife Sanctuary by V. Santharam, 68(I Floor), Santhome High Road, Madras 600 028: The article on the Birds of Mundanthurai in the November-December 1985 issue of the Newsletter has brought back to mind, memories of my trip to this lovely area, last year.

We had reached Tirunelveli on 3 March, 1985 from where we took the 2 pm bus to Karaiyar. The bus dropped us at Mundanthurai, close to the Forest Rest House by about 4.30 pm, after a tiring ride. Our friends - Ravi Chellam, Justus Joshua, Wesley Sunderraj and Vickraman, students of wildlife Biology, doing research projects at the sanctuary - had made all arrangements to make our stay a comfortable and enjoyable one. We are extremely grateful to them for all the help and assistance given to us during the trip.

The next five days were devoted to birdwatching, photographing the lovely landscape around and observing nature. We also trekked up to Kanniketti, at an altitude of 2550 feet. The magnificent cottage at Kaniketti, built way back in 1914 is situated in the sylvan settings of an evergreen forest. Although sparsely furnished and devoid of electricity, water supply (the nearest water source being the Kanniketti 'odai' (stream) about 2 furlongs away) and human beings, our stay at this cottage was most enjoyable. Kanniketti can be approached by a jeep and is about 22 kms by road from Karaiyar. Alternatively, one could take a ride in a motor operated boat across the Hope Lake at Karaiyar (Upper Dam) and trek the 10 km stretch through the moist deciduous and evergreen forests. We had opted for the latter and this proved to be a right decision.

During our stay at this sanctuary, we came across several sambhar, cheetal, wild boar, Nilgiri and common langurs, ruddy mongoose and malabar giant squirrels. We also came across fresh pug marks of a leopard, not far from the Rest House. But the most memorable sighting was that of the flying squirrel in a fairy tale like setting. We were relaxing on the verandah of the Kanniketti cottage, watching the full moon rise over the hills on the eastern sky and the numerous fire-flies, flying about emitting a glow of light. About 150 feet or so away was a bare tree, silhouetted against the eastern sky. Our attention was drawn to this tree following some movements. With the aid of our commander torch and binoculars we could make out the outline of a squirrel. Very soon the creature moved to the topmost branch and in a split second it was off, gliding across the full moon to disappear into the trees farther away!

Butterflies were seen in good numbers all over the place and at Kaniketti we came across several of the common birdwings, one of our largest and most colourful butterflies. A few flying lizards (Draco spp) were also noticed along the trunks of the trees along the road and many of them were observed displaying their bright orange throat patches. Earlier, at the Hope Lake, we managed to spot a marsh crocodile, one of the twenty four or so, that were released by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department.

The bird-life was simply terrific. In our short stay of just over five days, we were able to record about 115 species, some of them being new to me. The lovely white bellied blue flycatcher, seen against the thick green foliage in the evergreen jungle is still fresh in my memory.



We had a brief but unmistakable glimpse of a pair of brown throated spine tail swifts, flying up and down the Servalar river. On the tall trees along the banks of the same river we noticed chestnut-headed bee-eaters. One morning we came across a lovely specimen of the Rufous bellied hawk-eagle, soaring over the Tamraparani river. It gave us a good view of its black head, white breast and rufous belly. The only other time I saw this bird was in November, 1984 at Mukkali near Silent Valley. Ospreys were frequently seen over Servalar river and we had a grand view of a magnificent specimen of the black eagle from above as it sailed over a wooded valley, on our way to Kaniketti.

The sighting of the black capped Kingfishers at a check-dam at Mundanthurai and later at Hope Lake came off as a surprise since this species is known to frequent coastal areas and tidal creeks. We saw a pair of Malharbe's or large golden backed woodpeckers behind the cottage at Kaniketti. Small sunbirds were the commonest sunbirds at Kaniketti. Jerdon's imperial pigeons, Southern tree pies, Hill mynas, yellow-browed bulbuls, Malabar whistling thrushes, lorikeets and blue winged parakeets were some of the other common birds at Kaniketti. In the plateau, there were a good number of plain species including ioras, brown shrikes, whiteheaded babblers, jungle wren warblers, tailor birds etc.

During our night walks, undertaken with the hopes of spotting a leopard or some other nocturnal mammals, we heard calls of a nightjar which I have tentatively identified as that of the jungle nightjars. I happened to hear the calls later on at Chitteri in October 1985 and even saw the bird at dusk. These calls form the background sound in 'The Ganges Gharial', a film produced by the Bedi brothers, especially in the night shots. I hope readers, familiar with this species of nightjar who have seen this film, would care to confirm my identification.

I would like to conclude this note with a few additions to the list of birds prepared by Dr. Johnsingh and others. I should mention that some of these had been seen only at Kanniketti or en route.

1. Chestnut bitttern
  2. Crested Honey Buzzard
  3. Rufousbellied hawk-eagle
  4. Marsh harrier
  5. Green Sandpiper
  6. Jerdon's imperial pigeon
  7. Blue winged parakeet
  8. Jungle nightjar
  9. Edible nest swiftlet
  10. Large brown throated spine tail swift
  11. Malabar trogon
  12. Crimson throated barbet
  13. Malherbe's golden backed woodpecker
  14. Racket tailed drongo
  15. Hill Mynah or grackle
  16. Southern treepie
  17. Small minivet
  18. Goldenfronted chloropsis
  19. Fairy bluebird
  20. Ruby throated bulbul
  21. Redwhiskered bulbul
  22. Redvented bulbul
  23. Rufoustailed flycatcher
  24. Greenish leaf warbler
  25. Malabar whistling thrush
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### Correspondence

Identification of desert birds by Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma, D-67, Swai Madho Singh Road, Bani Park, Jaipur 302006:  
Newsletter for Birdwatchers was good reading in 1985. In Sept.-Oct. issue of the Newsletter, I read 'Common birds of Dhawa, Jodhpur' by B.D. Ranga and R.N. Ram with great interest, as I have considerable experience of birding in the desert especially in Jhunjhunu and Churu dist. of Rajasthan. I am doubtful about the identification of jungle crow, black bird (*Turdus merula*) and wood pecker (*Micropternus brachyurus*) at Dhawa. The Authors are requested to check their identification and reconfirm their findings.

The Punjab raven is a common bird in North-Western Rajasthan and can be easily confused with the jungle crow. The Punjab raven is differentiated from the jungle crow by its larger size, typical call, wedge shaped tail while

flying and by its habit of soaring in the afternoon in the company of pariah kites and vultures. The jungle crow is slightly larger than the house crow, while the Punjab raven is about the size of a pariah kite.

Although black birds (*Turdus merula*) are seen at Abu, it would be a most unexpected bird in the desert because of its preference for moist deciduous forests and is not seen in the desert.

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White storks in Ahmedabad district by Rajshree Sarabhai and Lalsinh Raol: In response to the note 'White storks in Rajkot' (N.L.11 and 12, 1985) we are tempted to send our observations. Our last three years' outings show that the number of white storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) seem to have increased. While going to Nal Sarovar, we almost always found a good number of white storks from November onwards. Nal Sarovar is 62 km from Ahmedabad. After 20 km from Ahmedabad the road turns left at Sanand, a town on the Ahmedabad-Virangam Road. No white stork was ever spotted by us upto Sanand. But they begin to appear in 5's, 10's and 20's a few kilometers beyond Sanand.

On 1.3.84 on our way to Nal Sarovar, we were attracted by a whole mass of white birds flying over a limited area near Goraj village. The sun had not then risen, but in the morning light we could judge that the birds could be storks. Eager as we were regarding the cause of such a big flock flying over a small area, we drove towards the site. A little walking took us to a embankment of the village pond. What we saw there was fantastic. In the drying water of the pond, there was so much fish, that a big congregation of fish eating birds like large egrets, little egrets, painted storks, pond herons and of course the white storks, which were predominating, was attracted there. The number of white storks could easily be 250 to 300. It looked as if a sumptuous feast was laid out for these birds and they had a nice time. One of us (Rajshree Sarabhai) took many coloured photographs of the group.

N.B. (I may here add that during the last four-five years I have seen black storks which formerly was a rare winter visitor) three times in the Saurashtra area. I think that because of the conservation activities in Europe, the number of white storks and black storks has now increased - Lalsinh)

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## आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में छात्रों को दोपहर का मूलभूत भोजन :-

आदिम जाति कल्याण विभाग द्वारा संचालित शालाओं के छात्रों को दिया जा रहा दोपहर का मूलभूत भोजन प्रदेश के सभी आदिवासी इलाकों के स्कूलों छात्रों को देने का निर्णय। इस कार्यक्रम का लाभ चार लाख बच्चों की मिलेगा।

मध्यप्रदेश में हरिजन और आदिवासियों की भलाई के कार्यक्रमों के लिए सातवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में छठी योजना की तुलना में दो गुनी राशि का प्रावधान।

आदिम जाति कल्याण के कार्यों में राज्य आयोजना, केन्द्र प्रवर्तित योजना, केन्द्रीय योजनाओं और विशेष केन्द्रीय सहायता प्राप्त योजनाओं पर सातवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में रुपये 160.74 करोड़ का प्रावधान। छठी योजना में इन कार्यों में रुपये 83.26 करोड़ व्यय हुए।

हरिजन विधोपाय योजना के तहत सातवीं योजना में रुपये 413 करोड़ की राशि का प्रावधान। छठी योजना में हरिजन विशेषांश योजना के अन्तर्गत लगभग रुपये 185 करोड़ का व्यय हुआ।

सातवीं योजना में प्रदेश के सभी आदिवासी विकास खंडों में एकीकृत बाल विकास कार्यक्रम लागू।

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योजनाओं का लाभ गरीबों की शोषणियों तक पहुंचाने के प्रयास।

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Courtesy K. S. HARSHVARDHANA BHAT

Editor: Zafar Futehally

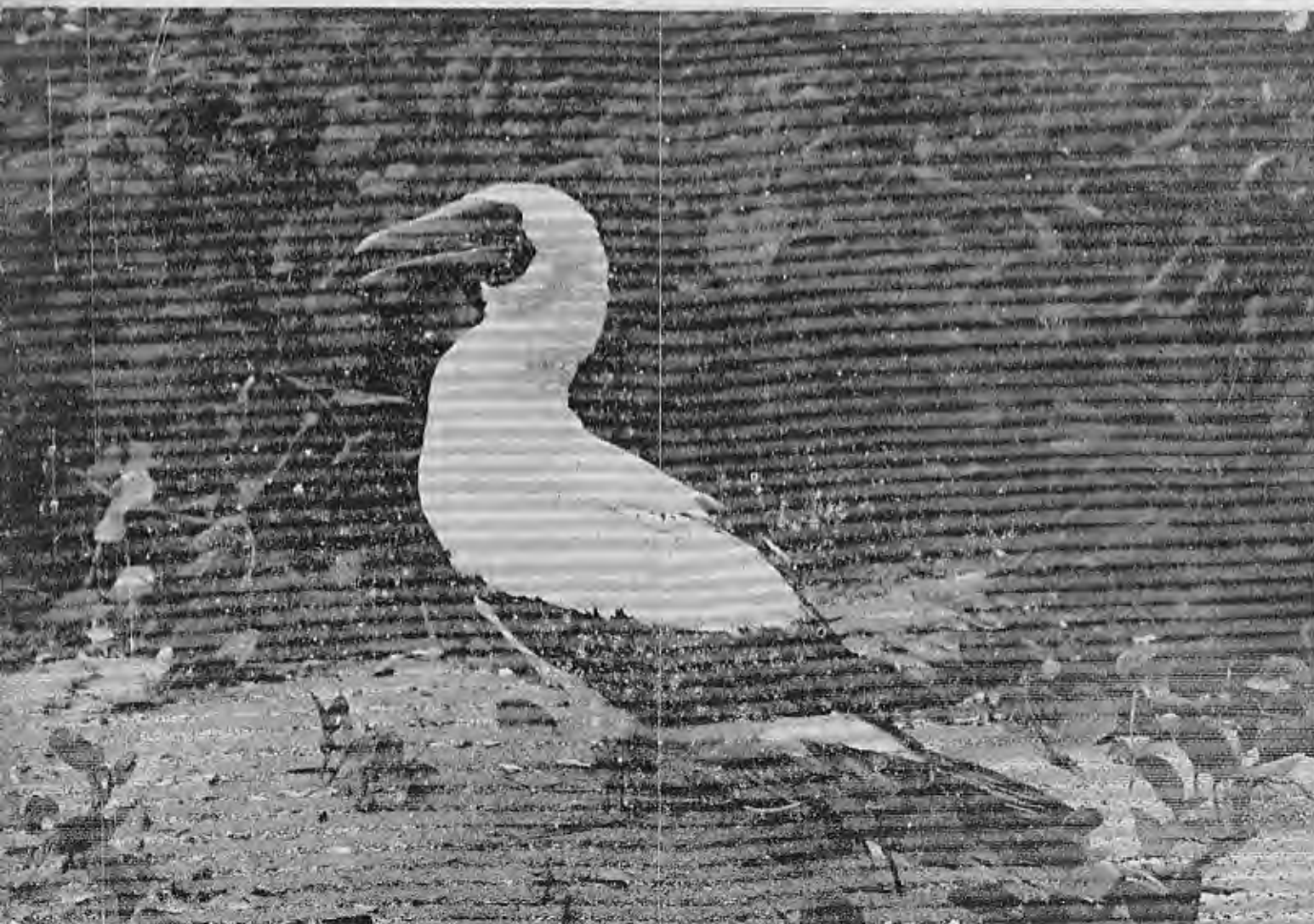
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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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VOL. XXVI NO. 9 & 10 SEPT. - OCT. 1986



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FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

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Rediscovery of the Jerdon's or Double-banded courser  
by Bharat Bhushan: The Jerdon's or Double-banded courser Cursorius bitorquatus was rediscovered on 14 January 1986 at the Lankamalai ranges of the Eastern Ghats complex in southern Andhra Pradesh. The rediscovery forms part of the Society's ongoing Endangered Species Project. Study of Ecology of certain Endangered species of Wildlife and their Habitats - sponsored by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service through the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Wildlife, Government of India.

First described in 1884, the double-banded courser was thought to be frequenting 'rocky hills with thin jungle' unlike the Indian Courser Cursorius coromandelicus which is found on open ground with almost no cover. The first specimens were procured by Dr. T. C. Jerdon in c. 1848 from 'the hilly country above the Eastern Ghats, off Nellore and Cuddapah'. W. T. Blanford collected two individuals in 1871 at Bhadrachallam and Sironcha along the Godavari river. Later in 1900, Howard Campbell reported sighting the bird at the Pennar river valley in the vicinity of Anantapur. That was the last record.

Being limited in geographical range, from only Anantapur, Cuddapah & Nellore along the Pennar river; and, Sironcha and Bhadrachallam along the Godavari, the Jerdon's Courser was one of the most important avian species in Indian limits that should have been studied in detail. With the nearest cousins in Africa, and an extremely limited range, its paucity of records was leading to a gap in Indian Ornithology. Unless a thorough search was carried out, we would be losing a missing link in the complex zoogeographical history of the country.

Hugh Whistler and Norman Kinnear during the Eastern Ghats survey in 1929-31 and later Salim Ali in 1932 during his Hyderabad Ornithological Survey, examined the areas 'pretty thoroughly' but without being able to spot the double-banded courser. Later a Smithsonian-sponsored BNHS survey team had surveyed the Godavari river areas without success. All these surveys seemed to have made the error in looking out for the bird in habitats which were suitable for the Indian Courser.

The BNHS decided to survey the Pennar river valley areas in May 1985 under the aegis of its 'Endangered Species Project'. The main aim of the survey was to decide whether the Jerdon's Courser was still present or already extinct. The survey was carried out in the Anantapur,

Cuddapah and Nellore districts through which the Pennar river flows. Contacts were established with local shikaris who subsisted partly on small birds like partridges and quails for food.

Jerdon had recorded the name in 1848 as 'Adavi-wuta-titti', supposedly meaning 'Jungle-empty-purse' in Telugu. Salim Ali could not contact anybody who recognised this name during his survey and wrote in the Handbook that it was not locally current.

During my survey, however, many shikaris both Yaanadi tribals and game-hunters correlated the offered description and name with the birds they knew. While 'Adavi' in Telugu meant 'Forest', the local people correlated the 'wuta-titti' to redwattled lapwing on account of its characteristic call. The double-banded courser must have been literally explained to Jerdon to signify 'Forest-lapwing' in Telugu thereby showing how closely the species was associated with jungle habitats and plovers. While some shikaris insisted that the double-banded courser was another form of Lapwing, curlew, sandgrouse or florican, I managed to locate one shikari in each district, who described the bird accurately and also related it exactly to the habitat as penned down by Jerdon and Blanford. These three descriptions were similar to each other and to Jerdon's description of the bird. Checking up on the double-banded courser's congenetics at the Society's library, a leading biological character was pinpointed. This character, common to all congenetics of the Jerdon's courser, but absent in all other coursers, claimed the bird to be nocturnal and/or crepuscular.

Only one of the three shikaris, Aitanna (at Reddipalli village in Cuddapah), whose description tallied with Jerdon, claimed the bird to be nocturnal. That was because the shikari himself hurried a right, going out with modified torchlights in the night to search for small and big game, he claimed to have regularly seen the courser feeding normally during the night.

Deciding to try out his claim, I based a field station at Vontimitta, near the Lankamalai ranges of Cuddapah. Apart from his description, the area tallied with Jerdon's note of 'hilly country above the Eastern Ghats, off Nellore and in Cuddapah'. The situation of the Lankamalai ranges corresponds to Jerdon's description of the location. Lankamalai ranges being north-west of

the Velikonda range from Nellore, would mean 'hilly regions above the Eastern Ghats'. Jerdon used to depend upon his contacts among the Yaanadi tribals in the area who possess detailed knowledge of the local flora and fauna.

While some searches were made tentatively in late 1985 and in mid-January 1986, success came unexpectedly. Using his modified torchlight, the shikari spotted the bird and found it dazed and absolutely stationery. He ran upto it and was able to pick it off the ground before the bird could react. I was shown the bird by Aitanna on 15th January and immediately recognised it to be the Jerdon's courser. Desiring my recognition to be confirmed by none other than Salim Ali, I contacted the Society's offices in Bombay. At his grand old age of 90 years, he made an air dash to the spot via Tirupati but was too late. The bird died before he could see it in a live condition. However the dead bird was skinned and will be kept in the BNHS collection.

One of the Yaanadi tribals at Cuddapah, Pichchanna by name, had related the poster showing the Jerdon's courser, with their local name, 'Kalivi-kodi', for the species. Kalivi-kodi is a conjunctive term for Carissa (Kalivi) and fowl (kodi) in Telugu. The BNHS will be utilising these Yaanadis for further studies being planned on the double-banded courser.

The death of the courser shown by Aitanna was tragic. I later saw two more individuals of the species in the Lankamalai foothill-scrub areas. Now the task is to locate a sizable population in the areas and also survey similar neighbouring habitats both along the Pennar and Godavari river courses. The best possible result would be to establish continuity between the two rivers both in terms of habitat and presence of the double-banded courser.

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Jerdon's courser again and the Telugu Ganga Canal: We reproduced a press release on Jerdon's courser in the Jan/Feb 86 issue, but we now include this account by Bharat Bharat Bhushan who was the researcher responsible for the re-discovery. Apparently moves are afoot (in the highest circles as they say) to convert the scrub jungle area where this bird was found, and adjoining areas into a sanctuary. 'Jerdon's courser was re-discovered



north of Cuddapah in Andhra Pradesh, and this spot which lies just east of the Lankamalai range and just west of the Vellikonda hills, is a continuation north from Tirupati of a narrow zone which seems to be almost uniquely perfect for preservation as a national park.... It seems that the Telugu Ganga Canal will have to be re-aligned slightly if this area is to be preserved. We can only hope that this will be done.

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Salim Ali is Ninety: Salim Ali will be ninety in November this year, and a seminar is proposed to be held in Bharatpur to mark the occasion. Our modest acknowledgement and tribute to his work is by the inclusion of this review by Shama Futehally, courtesy India International Centre.

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Historical factors and Bird Species Richness by Ranjit Daniels - A review of a paper by David L. Pearson: In this paper Pearson tries to lay emphasis on the Historical factors that influence the bird species richness (the number of species) and distribution (the number of individuals of each species) in the different habitat types. In other words he calls this the influence of historical factors on 'community structure' of birds in the different habitats. He discusses the various other factors believed to have influence proposed by other authors over the last 20 years.

The theory of convergence/niche replacement says that in similar habitats isolated by distance, morphologically similar, though often unrelated, species evolve or adapt themselves to play similar ecological roles. Habitats that are different will have different species and also different number of individuals. This theory has led to further questions like what are the characteristics of a species of bird if it has to exist in that habitat and also coexist with other species of birds.

The most similar species will compete most for the same resources. Therefore similarity becomes a limiting factor to coexistence. This limiting similarity can lead to competitive exclusion i.e., one getting displaced by another. Interspecific competition and limiting resource availability has been considered by Hutchinson as a factor that determines the species richness in any habitat. He



calculated mean (average) bill length in coexisting birds of the same genus (sympatric congeners). If food was the limiting resource then the bill length will certainly decide on what types of birds can survive in that area. Using this as a foundation Mac Arthur has presented models of how best species can fit into a given area (species packing) and what characteristics a species should possess if it has to successfully enter that particular area. However this theory has failed to consider physical factors and predation which also influence bird species richness.

Mac Arthur and Mac Arthur came up with another proposal. They tried to relate foliage complexity with the bird diversity. According to them, the more complex i.e., the more layers there are in the foliage profile the greater will be the chances of niche differentiation. This will lead to more bird species diversity.

Orians considers specialisation and constant and predictable resources as favouring more species, in some habitats than in others. He gives the example of habitats with fruits available all through the year. Such habitats will have frugivorous species of birds also added to their community. On the other hand if fruits are available for only a month during the year, the community will contain birds which are not totally frugivorous i.e., those species that can survive on alternative food sources.

Janzen and Schoener suggest that rainfall determines the resource levels. The warm and wet tropical areas have a greater range of dependable food types and hence more chances of birds feeding on them. Karr and others have associated high rainfall and minimal seasonality with high species richness.

Harrison and others have said that non-avian competitors like monkeys, squirrels, bats, lizards, spiders etc. can also determine the bird species richness of a habitat.

Island biogeographical theories proposed by Mac Arthur and Wilson have stirred up interest in historical factors. After an island has reached stability, competition, size of island, distance from the mainland species pool (the sum total of all species on mainland) have been considered important in determining the number of species maintained in an island or island like area. The dispersal ability along with random scattering or

straying are involved in colonizing a new area or habitat. Such dispersing species are often unsuccessful due to competition by the species already colonized. Established species are at a competitive advantage over the newly arriving species simply by 'seniority'. Evolutionary theories say that new features or characteristics that a species develops on isolation over a period of time is due to competition eventually leading to speciation.

Other theories have attempted to relate species richness on a habitat type to pre-historical events that are believed to have had some influence. Pleistocene dry periods, as believed, had fragmented the primary forests leaving only isolated patches surrounded by grassland and scrub. These 'refuges' had sheltered a community of the original bird species. Isolation led to speciation. When the wet periods returned, the forests merged. The species encountered one another. Through selection for traits among the bird species that lessened interspecific competition and through exclusion and extinction, a new forest community became established. It is evident that more of these refuges were present in South America than in Africa.

Pearson after his field studies in the lowland primary and secondary forests of Borneo, New Guinea, Africa, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia has concluded that neither of the following viz., foliage profiles, number of habitat types within study area, rainfall, number of dry months and the number of primates in the study area seem to have any influence on the bird species richness of these six regions.

He feels that historical considerations provide more accurate generalisations. Both New Guinea and Borneo have the lowest species total since they are islands. Islands have a low immigration rate but a higher extinction rate. Borneo has more species than New Guinea as it was till recently connected to the Southeast Asian mainland and therefore had a larger species pool as source. The longer isolation of new Guinea has led to the higher percentage of endemic species there. The greater number of species in the American sites than the African sites has been hypothesized by a combination of historical and ecological differences. More historical refuges existed in South America than in Africa. Birds got specialised to food etc. and thus when they encountered each other due to later merging of forests, they could coexist. This has probably led to the greater species richness.

The cause for more number of endemic species in the secondary forest habitats especially in Peru has been explained. These species may have developed in similar secondary type habitats that persisted in isolation during the dry period or perhaps these have been forced out by the dominant competitors and predators. These arrived into the primary forest with the reconnection of forests.

The lower primary forest species total in Bolivia as compared to Peru and Ecuador has been explained. It is likely that the Bolivia site is sufficiently distant from former refuges so that the species have not yet reached a stable number. Alternatively the low rainfall and greater chance of Antarctic cold fronts. Other such factors could affect the resource levels of forests that its carrying capacity (the maximum number of birds it can support) is smaller. Pearson feels that differences in soil type and nutrients have to be tested. However other examples can be quoted from his study which suggest that the Bolivian site was 'unique'.

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Tailor birds nesting in a well by R.Kannan: An old and derelict well can be found by one of the trails running from the ancient Keoladeo temple, in the national park at Bharatpur, Rajasthan. The area immediately around the well is wooded but the trail itself is flanked by vast marshes on either side.

In early June, 1985, a pair of Tailor birds used to 'chit-chit' about agitatedly whenever I walked past the well. They went almost berserk if I sat down on one of the concrete slabs encircling the mouth of the well. It was plainly obvious that they were nesting nearby. It was the height of the breeding season then, and there were tailor bird nests all around the reserve. Perhaps owing to this fact, I ignored this pair to some extent and made no real efforts to locate their nest.

The tenth of June was one of the hottest days of the season and the temperature soared upto 45°C. I had a strenuous session in the field all morning, and at about 11 in the fore-noon I decided to take a rest in the very place where the tailor birds so desperately sought privacy. It was comfortingly cool in there amongst the trees and bushes, and I almost started to doze when I



saw, much to my surprise, one of the tailor birds fly across and disappear like a dart into the mouth of the well. I got up and took a peek over the mouth, half expecting to see the bird splashing about in the waters after the apparently suicidal dive. But to my delight, I found that the bird had gone in there to transport material for a nest which was in the process of construction amongst the leaves of a Pipal sapling. The nest was about a couple of foot below the mouth of the well, and about ten feet above the surface of the murky waters. So precariously placed it was that it seemed very unlikely that any chick would survive its first flight from the nest. I resolved to monitor the developments over the days to come but due to some reasons, I could manage just one more visit to the nest, which was a week later (17 June). This time I found the nest neatly done, with a clutch of four white eggs ensconced in the cup, but the parents were nowhere about. Silence reigned the area, giving me the feeling that the birds could have deserted the site.

Why did the birds choose such an odd spot for nesting when there were so many promising sites about? Perhaps, the cool interior of the well afforded a lot of protection from the fierce heat of the summer, or may be the fact that the location was almost totally predator-proof lured the birds to nest in there. No self respecting coucal or mongoose would, I'm sure, ever attempt the maraund the contents of such a nest, as the risks of ending up in a watery grave would serve as an effective deterrent. But still, I wonder if it was a good idea for a clumsy nest builder like a tailorbird to nest right inside a well. The nest might have become predator proof, yes, but it surely isn't waterproof!

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#### A Visit to India by Graham Madge (Contd.)

Little Rann Nature Reserve 6 Feb.: After breakfast a taxi was called with driver who knew the conditions under which he would be driving and was willing to go. First birds of note were two black storks. Then we drove past some salt pans with waders including the usual black-winged stilts. This is a very salty area, saline water is pumped from underground to evaporate. Much of the ground is bare and devoid of vegetation. We stopped to look at an eagle perched on the ground quite close. It looked so big I thought it must be a steppe but when it



flew off it looked more like a tawny. I knew both well in Zambia and the immature steppes are easy, but that was 12 years ago and one gets out of touch. It was one of those birds one would like to go back and look at again - and that can never be done. This is where a photographer would be so useful, snapping everything and producing pictures which can be studied and argued over!

After driving along tracks and crossing areas with no tracks and seeing one and then several more of the attractively marked, milky looking wild asses which with a long stretch of water on our left, with flamingoes, pintail, waders and another new bird identified by Lal - the spotbill duck. I saw these and they had so much more white on them than I remembered in the book, that I just didn't realise what they were. There is said to be a mallard (a rarity!) in the area and Lal wanted to see it but it would have been very difficult to pick out one bird among so many ducks on a long and in places quite wide stretch of water. Our guide spotted three sandgrouse Pterocles exustus which we saw well before they flew off, and a darkish lark which allowed close examination was later identified as rufous-tailed finch lark. We walked on and on with patches of the thorny plant which has become a pest growing on our right. Flocks of short-toed larks flew ahead of us and we must have seen several hundred. Shoveller, gadwell, avocets, spoonbills, greater and lesser flamingoes were on the water but there were no cranes in the roosting area, though they should have been there at that time of day - late mid-morning. It was a long walk and we were glad to get back to the taxi. Drove home by a short cut which actually seemed longer.

Next day I enjoyed the luxury of a 'lazy day', relaxing, writing letters and tidying things up. Walked round the area which soon degenerates into poorer type housing with patches of open ground between, some with wet areas due to ineffective drainage where I saw pond heron and green sandpiper. A purple sunbird visits the flowers in the garden here and koel, collared doves, rosy starlings, rose ringed parakeets and mynas are around, not to mention the ubiquitous house crows found round all areas of human habitation. In the evening Taej Mundkura and Rishad Pravez came in from the university and while we were talking we heard birds calling. 'Cranes!' said Taej, and we nipped out to the balcony and could see demoiselles flying over, lit up from beneath by the city lights.

8 February - We hired a taxi for the day and Taej, Rishad and I set off for the salt works and nature sanctuary at Khijidia about 40 miles away. A red-headed falcon\* perched on a post was the best bird seen en route. We had a good look at it - the only one I saw on the whole trip so it does not seem to be common compared with kestrel, of which I must have seen about 20 altogether. At Khijidia the water level was low but there were plenty of waders and Taej used a powerful telescope to count them as part of his ornithological studies. There were plenty of the heron family - grey, purple and reef herons and large, smaller and little egrets. Waders included curlew, whimbrel, marsh sandpipers, redshank and spotted ditto (17) black-winged stilts, dunlin and little stints. A nice surprise was four red-necked phalarope on one of the salt pans. We had distant views of 4 common cranes, the first I have seen, and a special bird was a distant black-necked stork, though it looked very unexciting as it squatted, hunched up, on a far bund. I am glad I had good views of this species later on in my visit for it is magnificent when it spreads its wings to fly. Slender-bill gull was a new bird for me and we had good views of purple gallinules. In the distance, where there is still a lot of water at the far end of the sanctuary, we could see a great mass of demoiselles resting.

After our lunch we counted more waders on the extensive salt pans. Over a distant pan, gulls and waders arose and settled again. It was getting late and we did not have time to walk along the narrow, and sometimes, slippery, banks to get to them but a large party of Indian skimmers got up and obligingly flew across in front of us. I have now seen all three Rhynchops - Indian, African and the black skimmer of N.America. Lesser black-backed gulls and black-headed were also seen.

In the morning I saw great reed warblers in the bushes by the path where we walked to count the waders and I had a puzzling Acrocephalus low down in the tall rushes growing in the water. It was like a reed warbler with a distinct supercilium, almost a plain-backed sedge warbler, which suggests paddy field A. agricola. This should have a more rufous shade on the upperparts but I can't recall the precise shade of brown. These warblers are difficult and without getting to know them one cannot be sure of the identity from a single sighting. I feel sure it was not Blyth's reed A. dumetorum which I had already seen. It is one of those birds one would like to have in the hand.

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\* Perhaps redheaded merlin - Editor

9 February - Another quiet day getting ready for departure by train to Mithapur tomorrow. Changed travel cheques at bank. Nitin came with me and we were shown upstairs and had a cup of tea and friendly chat with one of the clerks interested in birds - slower but much more friendly than a modern, ultra efficient English bank where the cheques would be changed at the counter in a couple of minutes.

In the afternoon Nipo and I took an autoshow to the university campus to look for the painted sandgrouse Taej said were there. (He had been going to fetch me on his motor cycle but didn't turn up because of engine trouble). The university is in a dry area with rough, stony ground and low hills beyond it. We saw desert wheatears, a Richard's pipit and singing bushlark, among other birds. Then Nipo spotted sandgrouse crouching on the ground quite near us. Alas! They were the common chestnut-bellied Pterocles exustus, not the more handsome painted. Back at the university buildings we met Taej and Rishad on the recovered motor cycle and I told him about the grouse which he still thought were painted. Next morning, having checked to make sure, I was going to pull his leg about them but he had forestalled me by checking them himself and greeting me with, 'Those grouse are exustus after all!'

At the university Taej had pointed out a big tree where various birds roost, just the other side of a little village on the edge of the campus. We walked through the village to a small farm with buildings near the tree. Peafowl were strolling in towards the tree and one of the chaps was busy trying to keep them off one of the crops growing there. I counted 15 and no doubt there were more to come. We saw little cormorants, cattle and little egrets and one openbill stork fly into the tree and mynas and rosy starlings were collecting nearby, probably making for the same tree. More birds were arriving all the time but we could not stay to see them all in as we had to catch the last bus back to town, so there was no time for coffee with R and T at their hostel.

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Birds of the Delhi Ridge by Rupin Dang, Army Public School, Ridge Road, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi 110 010: Over the last two years that I have been living on the Delhi Ridge, I have come to know quite a lot about the denizens of this jungle with vegetation that varies from thorn scrub on scalding, hot rock in the summer to fragrant, downy



grasslands and dense, green scrub in the monsoons and cool, drying grasses and sedges in the winter.

As late as the 1930s there were Asiatic lions rearing the Ridge and panthers as late as the 1960s. Blue bull, black buck, chinkara and wild boar still roam on the outskirts. This lush green forest is what is referred to as Delhi's green lung, and but for it the capital's temperature would have been higher than it is and there would have been a noticeable decrease in the rainfall. Apart from this, it has prevented the Rajasthan desert from advancing.

Though today macaques, mongooses, hyaenas, civets, jackals, foxes, hedgehogs, hare, many snakes and giant rock lizards and many other animals are common, the birds hold the pride of place. Delhi has the total of over 470 species and sub-species of birds, of which I have contributed about nine species, that are found only on the Ridge and nowhere else.

The dry portions are host to a multitude of raptors and scavengers, the common ones being the tawny and imperial eagles, king, white backed, Egyptian, longbilled, and cinereous vultures. The vultures feed on the carcasses of the cows that die here. The yellow wattled lapwings, stone curlews, coursers, larks and grey shrikes inhabit these areas.

Dry thorny bushes with gnarled babuls are home to the thickbilled and tickell's flower peckers, purple sunbirds that feed on the berries and flowers of the capparis decidua bushes, white throated munias, painted, imperial and Indian sandgroose, little brown doves, ring doves, and blue-tailed and blue checked bee eaters. Mahratta woodpeckers and bay-backed and rufous backed shrikes are also common.

In the forest of Vilayati keekar, old Neems and flame-of-the forests or dhak trees live the parakeets, sunbirds, black-winged kites, bulbuls, tree pies, babblers (Jungle, large grey, common and rarely striated) drongos minivers (small whitebellied, and short billed) and the nightjars.

Finally there is the thick woodland that covers most of the ridge and is ideal for bird-photography and bird-watching alike. Shikras, sparrow-hawks, honey buzzards,



booted hawk eagles and the crested serpent and bonelli's hawk eagles and many more form the birds of prey. The grey and black partridge are the commonest birds here, though poachers do kill many of them even nowadays. A few species of quail are found here. Just after the rains when the water collects in puddles and pools and the stream near the ridge road fills up, the pond herons, white-breasted waterhens, red wattled lapwings and black-winged stilts shift in. The most common woodland birds here are the great-horned owl, spotted owl, common green pigeons, doves, cuckoos, rollers, barbets, grey hornbill, golden-backed woodpecker, and most interesting of all the flycatchers, richly represented by the paradise, white-browed fantail, greyheaded and redbreasted. On occasion the verditeer white-browed blue flycatchers have also been seen.

So when you next visit Delhi make sure that you visit the Ridge forest. Just step in from anywhere, the University, Buddha Jayantai or Mahavir Vanasthali Gardens, the Ridge road, Kishengarh, Simon Bolivar Marg or anywhere also and enter the magic land of Delhi.

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Mid-Winter Waterfowl Count by S.A.Hussain: In collaboration with the International Waterfowl Research Bureau, Slimbridge, U.K. and the Bombay Natural History Society, a Mid-Winter Waterfowl Count has been planned for 1986/87.

The aim of the census is to carry out a simultaneous census in the middle of January 1987 throughout the country to assess the number and dispersal of waterfowl. Knowledgeable birdwatchers are invited to contribute information for this count through a data form which will be distributed to those interested in taking part. If you are interested please contact: -

S.A.Hussain  
National Coordinator  
Asian Waterfowl Census  
Bombay Natural History Society  
Hornbill House (Museum Compound)  
Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road  
Bombay 400 023.

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A Mallard Explosion, by Aamir Ali, 14 ch. de la Tourelle, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland: There has been a sudden Mallard explosion on the Lake of Champex and I wonder what is going to happen to them all.

Champex is a small resort in the Swiss Alps, at about 1500 m. clustered round a mountain lake. The lake is small; it only takes about half an hour to walk round it. The water is clear and cold - a mountain stream runs through it. You can rent rowing boats and pedalos and there are always several keen fishermen on the banks after trout, as the lake is stocked. The majestic Grand Combin, over 4000m. overlooks the eastern end, while the Tour Saliere is reflected in the waters of the western end.

We have been visiting Champex more or less regularly for about twenty years and much of such birdwatching as I do, is done there. There have never been any water birds of any sort and one would not expect to see any on such a small lake so high up and with so much disturbing human activity around and on it.

On 2 May 1985, I heard the quacking of a duck but immediately assumed that I must be mistaken. What on earth would a duck be doing on our lake? That night it snowed heavily and in the morning there was about 20 cm. of fresh snow more coming down. I went round the lake and through the fog and snow, I saw two mallards on the water, honking in agitation for about ten minutes. And then, suddenly, a golden eagle swooped down from the pine trees where he was waiting. The ducks took evasive action and the eagle, a rather weak-kneed individual who was obviously easily disheartened, did not try again. The next morning, with clearer weather, I saw the male mallard quite clearly. There was no mistaking it: a couple had arrived. By mistake, having been blown off course? By design, seeking to escape the crowds and pollution of the larger lakes and seek peace and purity in these mountain resort? Would they stay?

Two days later, walking in the mountains around Champex, I came across a man from Orsieres, our nearest town, in the valley below. As he wore a Tyrolean hat with a feather, I assumed he must be a forest ranger or something akin to one, so I asked him about the mallards. Oh, yes, he said. A couple came the previous year and nested so this must be the same.

At the end of August, I saw three juveniles on the lake, so I presumed that the couple had nested successfully. I saw these three on several occasions, usually in the late afternoon, when the boaters and trippers had gone and the lake was peaceful.

Next spring, in April 1986, I saw four mallards on the lake, two male and two female. At the end of May, I saw a couple.

In mid-July, I saw four ducklings and was happy that our mallards had successfully raised a family.

On 5 August, however, I saw 19 mallards! At one end of the lake, there was a female with three young ones; further along was another female also with three but much younger; then a little later, I saw eleven others. Our local concierge, Mr. Duay, who was with me at the time, told me that three separate females had nested in the reeds and raised families. There was only one male, he said. Obviously, the male was not very proud of his achievement because he scarcely ever showed himself.

During August, it was practically impossible to look at the lake at any time without seeing some of our mallard population: disporting themselves in the water; being fed by visitors; chasing each other through the

water with much splashing (boys will be boys); eyeing the human activity around them with a puzzled look; sitting on a rock and flapping their wings or meditating on the problems of a duck's life.

There were times, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, for example, when there were about 20 boats out at a time, with quite a lot of noise and shouting and laughter. The new generation of mallards seemed to take this in their strides as if to the manner born.

From our balcony, we looked out on the western end of the lake, with a large rock on which the mallards often sat, sometimes 8 or 9 in a row. We soon began to look at them with a proprietorial air, feeling like some Peter Scott surveying his Slimbridge.

What will happen to these broods now? Presumably they will go off in autumn; the lake is completely frozen from December to April. Will they go off as a group? Just down to the lake of Geneva, about 30 km. as the duck flies, or further afield? How many will come back next year? Can any of you, perhaps, tell me?

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Exceptional Breeding of Rosy Pastor-Starling in India  
by P.S. Thakker, 146 Ashoknagar, Behind Sundarvan,  
Satellite Road, Ahmedabad 380 015: It is found from the records that breeding of Rosy Pastor/Starling (*Sturnus roseus* L) is extralimital (Salim Ali and Ripley, Vol.V, Page 163-166). Breeding season of the birds is May-June and breeds in SE Europe (West of Hungary) and SW Asia minor, middle east countries, Russian Turkestan etc.). The birds remain in subcontinent from early July to mid-May and remain absent from the subcontinent only for less than three months during the year.

On 24.10.1985, a person came to Sundarvan with five young ones of Rosy Pastor which were two inches in length (approximately). He handed over the hatchlings to Incharge, Bird Section of Sundarvan, Shri Arvindbhai Chavda, to look after them.

Unfortunately four out of five young ones died and one survived which is now kept in the cage and is strong enough waiting to meet brothers and sisters, i.e. young ones of the last year which are arriving to the region now. Some of them have already migrated (arrived) at Ahmedabad in July. This case is one of the exceptional breeding of Rosy Pastors in India and it should be recorded. The breeding season is also abnormal as they bred here in September-October. It is difficult to say that the birds in India as many such cases may go unnoticed without record.

I feel as the birds remain in India for majority period of the year, they should be considered as Indian birds as parliamentary rule for majority. The birds remain absent from the sub-continent for breeding only. Now birds have started breeding in the subcontinent. Thus this is additional weightage for considering them as resident birds.

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The Fall of a Sparrow by Salim Ali (New Delhi: Oxford  
University Press, 1985; 265 pages, Rs.110/-) - Courtesy  
India International Centre - A review by Shama Futehally:  
The publication of Dr.Salim Ali's autobiography has been greeted by the Indian press with wholehearted pleasure. No reviewer has found grounds for criticism. It is perhaps this, in the Indian context, which is the unusual feature of the book - that it is important and yet pleasurable. No solemn difference of opinion or divergence of ideals need interfere with the enjoyment of reading it.

The author more or less begins with what might be called the title-event of the book. This is the now famous anecdote of the yellow-throated sparrow which he shot as a schoolboy while vacationing in Chembur near Bombay (then an idyllic holiday spot!). There was, he says, 'a certain Victorian aura attached to hunting and shooting as a manly sport'. Salim thought he had bagged an ordinary sparrow, and it was about to be halalled for eating. But then he noticed that, unlike other sparrows, 'it had a yellow patch on the throat, like a curry-stain. My main concern at this moment was whether this sparrow was lawful meant for a God-fearing little Muslim or not. Unwilling to jeopardize my prospects in the hereafter, I prevented the halalling and instead carried the corpse back to the house to obtain an authentic pronouncement (fatwa) from Uncle Amiruddin, the shikari of the family. He examined the sparrow carefully and agreed that it was a different bird, apparently not having noticed one like it before. Uncle Amiruddin was one of the earliest Indian members of the Bombay Natural History Society....He gave me a letter of introduction to the then Honorary Secretary.. asking his help in identifying the bird'.

This little event seems to suggest several things about Salim Ali's family background which must have contributed signally to making him what he was. First, his family was clearly an 'Indian Victorian' one, which had acquired not just the leisure pursuits of the sahib but also his instinctive assumption that the outdoors meant enjoyment. It also pursued the best traditions of an English education and early scientific inquiry. The family had not however abandoned their indigenous Muslim consciousness to the extent of becoming hollow brown sahibs. Nor had they abandoned their close and unquestioning family ties (Uncle Amiruddin was the boy's self-appointed foster parent) which indeed were to be invaluable to the author throughout his life.

Incidentally, that English (and Muslim) education cultivated in him a love of elegant language which is apparent in the passage quoted, as in every passage of the book. One of Salim Ali's assets, even as a scientist, has been the confident and witty English which he used with such enjoyment.

The story proceeds through the Bombay of horse-trams and sprawling bungalows, and through an unprofitable but picturesque spell in Burma in the rôle of 'businessman'.

But this period was as rewarding in terms of birds and wildlife as it was unrewarding financially. After his return to Bombay and his marriage, Salim remained jobless because by now he was interested only in a natural history job. His first break was his appointment as guide-lecturer at the Bombay Natural History Society; his second was the opportunity to spend a year in Berlin studying under the famous ornithologist Prof. Erwin Stresemann. On his return he lived in the family seaside cottage at Kihim, near Bombay, and was as jobless as before.

At Kihim, for want of gainful employment, he took to sitting in the stubble and watching weaver birds. This was to result in the path-breaking study of the weaver bird's habits, which 'showed that the birds had not read the text-books'. It established that the male weaver is an 'artful polygamist', and that female weavers make their choice of husband based on the male's nest-building capacity.

Also during this period it occurred to Salim that he could try to carry out regional ornithological surveys, since there were such large areas of the sub-continent-particularly the princely states-whose bird life was little known. He began the search for sympathy and funds, and around 1930 the BNHS agreed to sponsor a three-month survey of Hyderabad state. At the time this state represented the largest single gap in Indian ornithology. The Hyderabad survey was to be the first of a series which covered Travancore, Bahawalpur in Rajasthan, Kutch, the Bastar region, and several small states in what are now Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and Orissa.

In the thirties, living in the field in India meant carrying along mountainous necessities (including a 'basket of live chickens for progressive transfer to the menu') by bullock-cart or manual portage or by eccentric and alarming 'private' buses. It meant seeing fresh wildlife tracks every morning and facing genuine danger from man-eaters. It meant occasional running into a British officer who was fulminating against the impudence of 'that Gandhi', and who needed to be told what was what (This was a task which S.A. performed with gusto). And the absurdities of India fifty years ago were more endearing than those of today-like the Cochin Forest Tramway, which could be comfortably overtaken by a bullock-cart. Many of the surveys were carried out under the patronage of the royalty of the state, and the reader gets his money's worth out of the assorted Highnesses that the author encountered. The Ameer of Bahawalpur should perhaps take pride of place:



...a uniquely naive feature of the state's hospitality was that guests were classified as First Class and Second Class. You remained in the dark about your status till you saw what was on your breakfast plate next morning. For, prominently displayed on the wall opposite the dining table, was the Key to the diagnosis. The notice had two columns listing clearly what a First Class guest should expect for his meals, and what the other of lower status: items like '1st class guest 2 eggs, 2nd class guest 1 egg. 1st class guest 2 toasts, 2nd class guest 1 toast' and so on down the menu. It was an unambiguous but rather brutal way of making you see yourself as the state saw you. It was therefore some relief to find two eggs on our tray next morning!

At the time of the Bahawalpur survey Salim and his wife were living an idyllic life in Dehra Dun. But in July 1939, Tehmina Ali died a tragically unnecessary death from blood-poisoning. This deprived Salim of a companion who was not only lovable, devoted and feminine, but also one who gave him the stoutest support in the pursuit of his non-profit profession. After her death he left Dehra Dun and was welcomed with equally staunch devotion into the household of his sister and brother-in-law in Bombay.

During the surveys which were now continuing, Salim was establishing that his interest was in the ecology of the living bird and not in cabinet specimens, an interest which was perhaps a little ahead of its time. (I know that at one time he used to urge young naturalists to stop looking for 'prestige' species and to give their attention to the habits of the humble House Crow). Later, this ecological bias turned to a special interest in the economic importance of birds as cross-pollinators, and as destroyers of insect pests.

The surveys were followed by collecting trips, bird-ringing camps, and expeditions of various kinds, in nearly every part of the country. On some of these Salim was accompanied by his friend Lok Wan Tho, the cultured, charming and phenomenally generous industrialist from Singapore. In 1937 the former participated in a collecting expedition in Afghanistan with the legendary cross-patch Col. Meinertzhagen. In 1945 he performed an 'ornithological pilgrimage' to Kailas Mansarovar, and in 1950, for good measure, he toured Europe on a



motor-cycle. The expedition to Mansarovar provides the largest selection in the book of excerpts from the author's diary:

17. vi.45. ... when I chased a Fat-tailed Lizard, Lappa, who is some species of Buddhist, admonished me saying that according to them killing one of these lizards is equivalent to a hundred murders.. The lizard having taken to a desert life and renounced the good things of this world-eating, drinking and merry-making- has become a swami or recluse. Therefore, killing it ranks with the murder of one sadhu=100 ordinary mortals.

Such an entry shows that if only Salim Ali had kept a more regular diary on matters other than birds, this book would have been a mine of information of social as well as natural history. Since he has explored Tibet, Afghanistan, Sikkim, Bhutan, the Bastar region in '49 and innumerable other regions of India before the 'standardizing' process began; since he has worked with the Bhil hunters of Bastar, the Puggie trackers of Kutch, the Mirshikari trappers of Bihar-since he has, in fact, worked this country on foot as few people have-one cannot help making the respectful submission that he should have kept a diary. Surely such a diary could have taken its place with productions such as The Malay Archipelago, that classic work by Darwin's contemporary Alfred Wallace. As it is, the author regretfully admits that he has had to rely mainly on memory-and memory tends to throw up the spectacular anecdote rather than the nitty-gritty of social observation.

It is also obvious that Dr. Ali considers it a waste of time to dilate on such matters as emotions and the inner life! He has, amusingly, appended a separate chapter on religion and such-like matters, as if to acknowledge that the Hereafter has been given short shrift in the life-story, not to mention the life. But perhaps Salim Ali is less of an unbeliever than he thinks. Because, it is clear, all his life he has looked about him and felt a powerful gratitude for God's good world.

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## ವಿಧಾನ ಸಭೆಯಿಂದ ಗ್ರಾಮ ಸಭೆಗೆ

### ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ ವಿಧೇಯಕ

ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ ವಿಧೇಯಕ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರಪತಿಯವರ ಅಂಗೀಕಾರ ಪಡೆದ ಮೇಲೆ 14-8-85ರಂದು ಜಾರಿಗೆ ಬಂದಿತು.

ಸಮಗ್ರ ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಕೈಗೊಂಡಿರುವ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ವಿಕೇಂದ್ರೀಕರಣ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ ವಿಧೇಯಕ ಒಂದು ದಿಟ್ಟ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ. ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಸರ್ವತೋಮುಖ ಏಳಿಗೆಗೆ ಗ್ರಾಮ ರಾಜ್ಯದಿಂದ ರಾಮರಾಜ್ಯವನ್ನು ಕಟ್ಟುವ ಯತ್ನವಿದು. ಇನ್ನು ಆಡಳಿತ ವಿಧಾನ ಸಾಧದಿಂದಲ್ಲ, ಅದು ಗ್ರಾಮದಿಂದ ಆಗಬೇಕು. ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಪೂರ್ವದಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಇಂತಹ ಅಪೂರ್ವ ಕನಸನ್ನು ಬಾಪೂಜಿ ಕಂಡಿದ್ದರು. ಅಂತಹ ಅಪೂರ್ವ ಕನಸು ಇಂದು ನನಸಾಗಿದೆ.

ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಸರ್ವತೋಮುಖ ಏಳಿಗೆ ಸಾಧನೆ ಮತ್ತು ಯಾವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ಹಾಗೂ ಕೆಲಸ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳು ಎಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆಯಬೇಕೆಂಬ ನಿರ್ಧಾರ ಇನ್ನು ರಾಜಧಾನಿಯಿಂದಲ್ಲ, ಬಡತನ ನಿರ್ಮೂಲನಾಕ್ರಮ, ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳ ಕೆಲಸ ಹೇಗೆ ನಡೆಯಬೇಕೆಂಬ ಎಲ್ಲ ನಿರ್ಣಯ ಹಾಗೂ ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆ ನಿಮ್ಮಿಂದ, ನೀವು ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಬಳಿ ಹೋಗಬೇಕಲ್ಲ, ಸರ್ಕಾರವೇ ನಿಮ್ಮ ಹತ್ತಿರ ಬಂದು ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆ, ಮತ್ತು ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯನ್ನು ವೀಕ್ಷಿಸುವುದು.

ಗ್ರಾಮ ಸಭೆಯನ್ನೇ ಈ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯ ಮೂಲ ಘಟಕವನ್ನಾಗಿ ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಲಾಗುತ್ತದೆ. ಅಲ್ಲದೆ ಮಂಡಲ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿಗಳ ಒಕ್ಕೂಟವೇ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯಾಗುವುದು.

#### ಅಂಗರಚನೆ :

- 1) ಎಲ್ಲ ಮತದಾರರು ಆ ಗ್ರಾಮದ ಗ್ರಾಮ ಸಭೆಯ ಸದಸ್ಯರಾಗಿರುವವರು. ಅಲ್ಲದೇ, ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ತಿಗೆ ನಡೆಯುವ ಚುನಾವಣೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮತದಾನದ ಹಕ್ಕನ್ನು ಪಡೆದಿರುತ್ತಾರೆ.
- 2) ಪ್ರತಿ 400 ಗ್ರಾಮ ಸದಸ್ಯರಿಗೆ ಒಬ್ಬರಂತೆ ಮಂಡಲ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿಗೆ ಒಬ್ಬ ಸದಸ್ಯನನ್ನು ಚುನಾಯಿಸುವರು.
- 3) ಹೀಗೆ ಚುನಾಯಿಸಲ್ಪಟ್ಟ ಸದಸ್ಯರು ಚುನಾಯಿತ ಸದಸ್ಯರಲ್ಲಿ ಒಬ್ಬ ಪ್ರಧಾನ ಮತ್ತು ಉಪ ಪ್ರಧಾನರನ್ನು ಮಂಡಲ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿಗೆ ಚುನಾಯಿಸುವರು.
- 4) ಎಲ್ಲಾ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕಿನಿಂದ ಪ್ರತಿ 28,000 ಜನಸಂಖ್ಯೆಗೆ ಮತ್ತು ಕೊಡಗು ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತಿ 12,000 ಜನಸಂಖ್ಯೆಗೆ ಒಬ್ಬರಂತೆ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ತಿಗೆ ಒಬ್ಬ ಸದಸ್ಯನನ್ನು ಚುನಾಯಿಸುವರು.
- 5) ಮಂಡಲ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕೂಡ ದುರ್ಬಲ ಮತ್ತು ಅನುಸೂಚಿತ ಜಾತಿ ಪಂಗಡಗಳಿಗೆ ಮತ್ತು ಮಹಿಳೆಯರಿಗೆ ಮೀಸಲಾತಿ ಉಂಟು (ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕಿಗೆ ಒಬ್ಬರಂತೆಯಾದರೂ ಮಹಿಳಾ ಸದಸ್ಯರು ಇರುವರು).
- 6) ಚುನಾಯಿಸಲ್ಪಟ್ಟ ಸದಸ್ಯರಲ್ಲಿಗೆ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸಹಕಾರ ಬ್ಯಾಂಕಿನ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಶಾಸಕರು ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಪರಿಷತ್ತಿನ ಸದಸ್ಯರಾಗಿರುವರು.
- 7) 18 ವರ್ಷ ವಯಸ್ಸಿನ ಪ್ರತಿಯೊಬ್ಬ ಗ್ರಾಮ ನಿವಾಸಿಗೆ ಮತದಾನದ ಹಕ್ಕು ಇರುತ್ತದೆ. ಚುನಾವಣೆಗೆ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಯಾಗಿ ನಿಲ್ಲುವವರಿಗೆ 25 ವರ್ಷ ತುಂಬಿರಬೇಕು.
- 8) ಜನರಿಂದ ನೇರವಾಗಿ ಚುನಾಯಿತರಾದ ಸದಸ್ಯರು ಮಾತ್ರ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷ ಹಾಗೂ ಉಪಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರಾಗಿ ಆಯ್ಕೆಯಾಗಬಲ್ಲರು.

— ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ನಾರ್ತ್

ಅ ಭಿ ವೃ ದ್ಧಿ ಯ ಅ ಧಿ ಕಾ ರ ನ ಮ್ಮ ದು

*Front Cover:* THE MASKED BOOBY (Sula Dactylatra)

Courtesy K. S. HARSHVARDHANA BHAT

**Editor:** Zafar Futehally

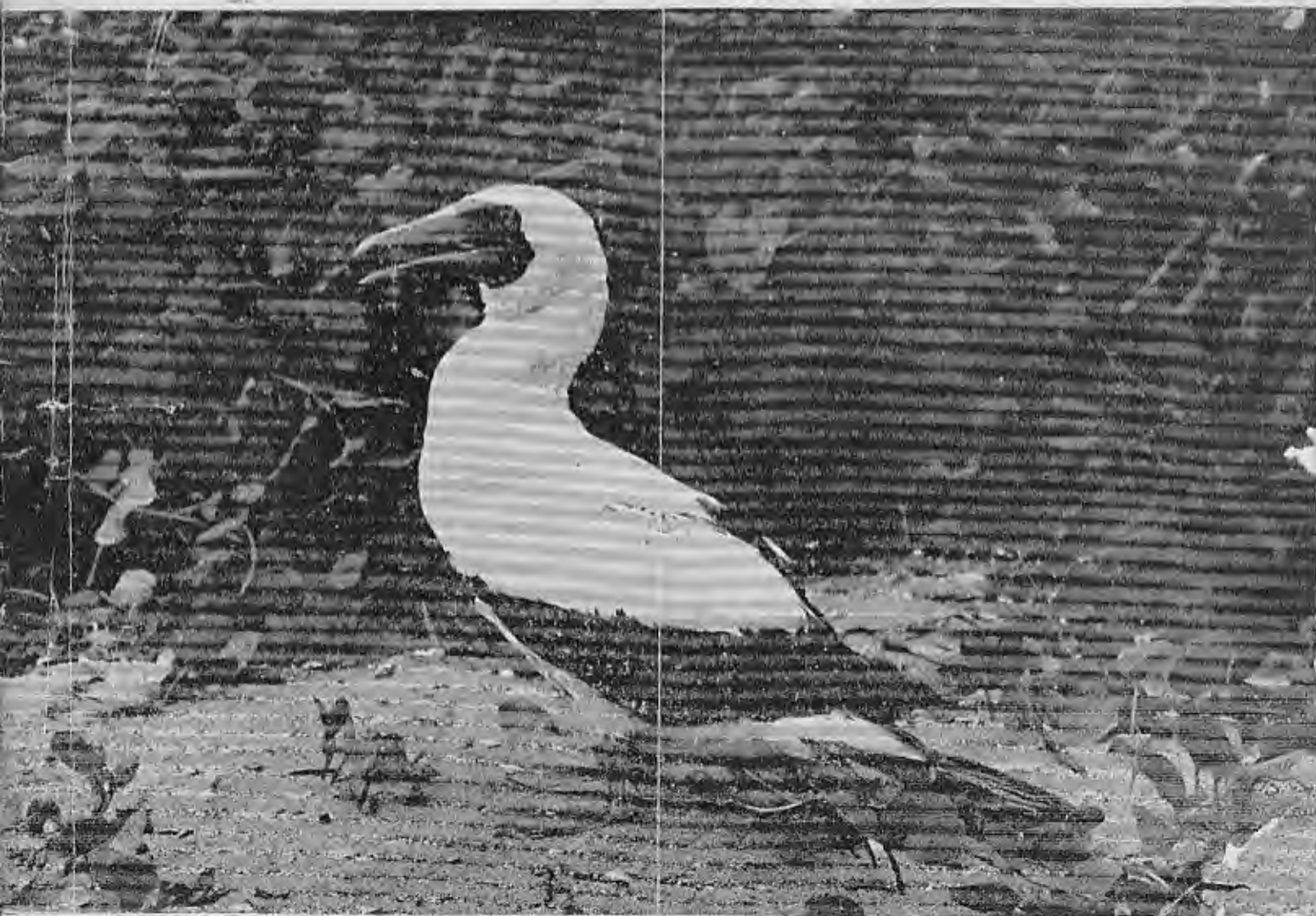
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# Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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## ಕರ್ನಾಟಕವು ವಾಸ್ತವವಾಗಿ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯದತ್ತ ಮುನ್ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿದೆ

ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯೋತ್ಸವವನ್ನು ಆಚರಿಸುವುದೆಂದರೆ ನಮಗೆ ಸಹಜವಾಗಿಯೇ ಹೆಮ್ಮೆ. ನಮ್ಮ ಭಾರತ ದೇಶದ ಮಹಾನ್ ಜನತೆಯ ಪುನರ್ಜನ್ಮದ ಸಂಕೇತ ಈ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ದಿನ.

ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯದ ನಿಜವಾದ ಚೈತನ್ಯವನ್ನು ಎತ್ತಿ ಹಿಡಿಯುವಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ನಿಜಕ್ಕೂ ಮೇಲುಗೈಯಾಗಿದೆ. ಇತ್ತೀಚಿನ ವರ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ನಮ್ಮ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸಾಧಿಸಿರುವ ಪ್ರಗತಿಯನ್ನು ಪರಿಶೀಲಿಸಿ ನೋಡಿದರೆ ಸಾಕು. ಈ ಅಂಶ ಸ್ಪಷ್ಟವಾಗಿ ಮನವರಿಕೆಯಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು ಪೂರೈಕೆ: ಭಾರತದ ಯೋಜನಾ ಆಯೋಗದ ಸಮೀಕ್ಷೆಯ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು ಪೂರೈಕೆ ಯೋಜನೆಯನ್ವಯ 1984-85ರಲ್ಲಿ ನಮ್ಮ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಇಡೀ ದೇಶದಲ್ಲೇ ಪ್ರಥಮ ಸ್ಥಾನದಲ್ಲಿತ್ತು. ಕಳೆದ ಮೂರು ವರ್ಷದಲ್ಲಿ 28,658 ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳನ್ನು ತೋಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಜೀತ ಮುಕ್ತರಿಗೆ ಪುನರ್ವಸತಿ: ಜೀತ ಪದ್ಧತಿಯ ನಿರ್ಮೂಲನದಿಂದ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ 62,689 ಮಂದಿ ಜೀತದಾಳುಗಳು ಬಿಡುಗಡೆ ಹೊಂದಿದರು. ಇವರಲ್ಲಿ 1985-86ರ ಅಂತ್ಯದ ವೇಳೆಗೆ 39,752 ಮಂದಿಗೆ ಪುನರ್ವಸತಿ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಶಾಲಾ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಉಚಿತ ಸಮವಸ್ತ್ರ: ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ವ್ಯಾಸಂಗ ಮಾಡುವ ಒಂದು ಮತ್ತು ಎರಡನೇ ತರಗತಿಯ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಉಚಿತ ಸಮವಸ್ತ್ರ ವಿತರಣೆ ಮಾಡಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಯಿಂದ 22 ಲಕ್ಷಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಪ್ರಯೋಜನ ಹೊಂದಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಶಾಲಾ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಉಚಿತ ಪಠ್ಯ ಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳ ವಿತರಣೆ: ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಕಾರ್ಯರೂಪಕ್ಕೆ ತಂದಿರುವ ಇನ್ನೊಂದು ಕ್ರಾಂತಿಕಾರಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಶಾಲೆಯ ಒಂದರಿಂದ ನಾಲ್ಕನೇ ತರಗತಿವರೆಗಿನ ಸುಮಾರು 53 ಲಕ್ಷ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಉಚಿತವಾಗಿ ಪಠ್ಯ ಪುಸ್ತಕಗಳನ್ನು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಆನಾಥ ವಿಧವೆಯರಿಗೆ ಮಾಸಾಶನ: ರೂ. 1500ಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಪರಮಾನವಿರುವ ವಿಧವೆಯರಿಗೆ 50.00 ರೂ. ಮಾಸಾಶನ ನೀಡಿಕೆ. 1985-86ರಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಪ್ರಯೋಜನ ಪಡೆದವರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಸುಮಾರು 3 ಲಕ್ಷ.

ಹೆರಿಗೆ ಭತ್ಯೆ: ಮಹಿಳಾ ಕೃಷಿ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರಿಗೆ ಹೆರಿಗೆಗೆ ಮುಂಚೆ ಅಥವಾ ಬಾಣಂತಿ ತನದ ಕಾಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾಸಿಕವಾಗಿ 100 ರೂ.ಗಳಂತೆ ಮೂರು ತಿಂಗಳು ಧನ ಸಹಾಯ. 1985-86ರಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಪಡೆದವರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 85,018.

ತಾಳ ಭಾಗ್ಯ: ಸಾಮೂಹಿಕ ವಿವಾಹಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹಿಸುವ ಹಾಗೂ ಮದುವೆ ದುಂದು ವೆಚ್ಚವನ್ನು ಕಡಿಮೆ ಮಾಡುವುದಕ್ಕಾಗಿ ರೂಪಿಸಲಾಗಿರುವ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದನ್ವಯ, 1985-86ರಲ್ಲಿ 2,300ಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಮಂದಿ ಪ್ರಯೋಜನ ಪಡೆದಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಕಡಿಮೆ ದರದಲ್ಲಿ ಆಹಾರ ಧಾನ್ಯ ವಿತರಣೆ: ವರ್ಷಕ್ಕೆ 3,500 ರೂ.ಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಪರಮಾನವಿರುವ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳ ಸಹಾಯಾರ್ಥ ಇನ್ನೊಂದು ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ. ಈ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಿಂದ ಸುಮಾರು 30 ಲಕ್ಷ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಬಡ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳು ಅನುಕೂಲ ಹೊಂದಿವೆ.

ಜನತಾ ಸೀರೆ ಮತ್ತು ಪಂಚೆಗಳ ವಿತರಣೆ: ವರ್ಷಕ್ಕೆ 3,500 ರೂ.ಗಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಪರಮಾನವಿರುವ ಸುಮಾರು 43 ಲಕ್ಷ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಕುಟುಂಬಗಳವರಿಗೆ 15ರೂ.ಗೆ ಒಂದು ಪಂಚೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಪರ್ಮಿ ಪೀಸು ಮತ್ತು 12-50 ರೂ.ಗೆ ಒಂದು ಸೀರೆ ರವಿಕೆ ಕಣ ನೀಡಲಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

20 ಅಂಶಗಳ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಲ್ಲಿ ಉನ್ನತ ಮಟ್ಟದ ಸಾಧನೆ: ಅಂಕಿ ಅಂಶಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಯೋಜನಾ ಆಯೋಗದ 1985-86ರ ರಾಜ್ಯವಾರು ಸ್ಥಾನ ಸೂಚಿ. ಇವುಗಳ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಉನ್ನತ ಸ್ಥಾನದಲ್ಲಿದೆ.

ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಭಾರತದ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರಿಗೆ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಖಾತರಿ ಯೋಜನೆ. ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ. ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಜಾತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಬುಡಕಟ್ಟುಗಳ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ. ಹಳ್ಳಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರಿನ ಪೂರೈಕೆ. ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ವಿದ್ಯುದೀಕರಣ. ಸಸಿ ನೆಡುವಿಕೆ. ಕುಟುಂಬ ಯೋಜನೆ. ಪ್ರಾಥಮಿಕ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ. ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಶು ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಸೇವಾ ಕೇಂದ್ರಗಳು. ಗೊಬ್ಬರ ಅನಿಲಸ್ಥಾವರ. ವ್ಯವಸಾಯಕ್ಕೆ ಪಂಪ್‌ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳ ವಿದ್ಯುದೀಕರಣ.

ಬರ ಪರಿಹಾರ: ಬರಗಾಲ ನಿವಾರಣೆಗಾಗಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ಬಹುಮುಖವಾದ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಜಾರಿಗೆ ತಂದಿದೆ. ಇದರಿಂದಾಗಿ ಕೊಳವೆ ಬಾವಿಗಳು, ಕೆರೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಸಾಲೆಗಳು. ಗ್ರಾಮ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ರಸ್ತೆಗಳು ಮತ್ತಿತರ ಶಾರ್ವತ್ರಿಕ ಆಸ್ತಿಯ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಅರುಣಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ: ಕಳೆದ ಒಂದು ವರ್ಷದಲ್ಲಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಅರುಣಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯನ್ವಯ 39,000 ಹೆಕ್ಟೇರ್ ಭೂಮಿಯಲ್ಲಿ 25.46 ಕೋಟಿ ಸಸಿಗಳನ್ನು ರೈತರುಗಳಿಗೆ ತಮ್ಮ ಜಮೀನಿನಲ್ಲಿ ನೆಡಲು ಹಂಚಿದೆ.

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಾರ್ತೆ

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## EDITORIAL

As another year comes to a close I must again apologise for editorial failings and offer to make amends in the next. I have a dozen complaints from subscribers about non-receipt of the Newsletter - not all of which can be put in the lap of the post office or the despatch agent. I have now made list statewide of subscribers which will ensure more efficiency, I hope. But may I request all of you to send me your addresses in BLOCK LETTERS with pin code, with the subscription which is being raised to Rs.20 for 1987. A hike of only Rs.5/- in 26 years of an inflationary world cannot be objected to, and if the advertisers oblige to the same extent as in 1986, I will be able to cover costs in 1987.

During the year articles or letters from 35 contributors were published. Through one unfortunate error the article by Graham Madge on Kutch was published twice in the May-June as well as the September-October issue. A case of unpardonable over delegation by the Editor. There are some pieces in the pending tray, but several of these are hand written and difficult to decipher. A couple of long articles on Bharatpur have been held up because so much has been written on this area recently. I hope readers will make an attempt to keep notes in the form of a ledger for each species as suggested in the July-August issue of this year. For one thing, if one decides to keep notes in the manner of the Handbook of British Birds by Witherby and others, there is much to write and think about, even of the commonest species.

My special thanks to Mr.R.E.Hawkins and Mr.Thomas G.y for sending me missing numbers re. y files; to Ashok Kumar for a handsome cheque of Rs.1000/- and to many others for generous donations from time to time.

I am again without secretarial assistance; the previous one is heading for Home, and the next incumbent is not yet in place. But the Newsletter will survive.

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Birds and Birdwatching: A report from Hyderabad by M.Sudhakar Marathe, Reader in English, University of Hyderabad, Nampally Station Road, Hyderabad 500 001: Times and again one reads in the Newsletter pleas for more notes and articles for publication. The last issue (Nov.-December 1985) finds Mr.Fatehally in desperation naming the staple writers in the hope that they will send in contributions. I suspect that this paucity of contributions is not caused by lack of bird 'news' so much as by inexperience in this field on the part of many observers. I write this piece both to illustrate this suspicion and also to provide what I would consider legitimate bird 'news'.

Every morning at sunrise near my flat on the campus of the University of Hyderabad can be seen one or both birds of a pair of Hoopoes. First, I may not know whether such a sighting of Hoopoes in this area is newsworthy. Further, on several occasions I have seen one of the Hoopoes flitting around on the wing, at an average height of between eight and ten feet, behaving in exactly the same way that I have seen bee-eaters do when, for some reason, they are unable to catch their prey on first attempt. Even more apt for comparison are, perhaps, a bulbul's repeated attempts, in flight, to catch an insect on the wing. Now a question occurs to me, as an amateur bird watcher: with its beak so thin and long, clearly meant for picking up white ants or similar prey from the ground, how can a Hoopoe hope to catch an insect on the wing? For the behaviour had nothing of the showing-offishness of mating display. As an amateur, I do not know whether this behaviour is typical Hoopoe behaviour or something worth bringing to bird watchers' notice. I happen to have spent the necessary money to buy the Ali-Ripley (10 volume) Handbook, and I may be able to check this habit with that excellent guide. But naturally most amateurs will lack such sources of information, and therefore either forget about the oddity or worry over it in their minds without ever being enlightened. They would definitely hesitate to report it to the Newsletter. I would like to suggest that very brief news of sightings and odd-sounding behaviour should be welcomed, perhaps even in a separate column.

Not only the amateur's relative ignorance of actual facts, but other reasons also preclude his reporting. First of all, he may not know of the Newsletter. I believe that the Newsletter deserves far greater publicity, whether



its subscription list grows or not, and special efforts ought to be made to secure such publicity. Secondly, those amateurs who are aware of the Newsletter, or other such organs, and like me even subscribe to it, are daunted by the knowledgeable reports which appear in the columns; they are rightly hesitant in the company of the kind of reporter who has both the credentials and opportunities to go to wonderful places like the Rajasthan desert or the Arunachal hills, and report on birds there. Amateurs are also further daunted by the soon enough acquired awareness that these people write with such wealth of knowledge and background that to come up to their level seems an impossibility.

All these and other reasons combine to raise the question whether what is news to the amateur is news to the veteran and aficionado. Thus have I, at least, hesitated to send what I thought was good or even great news. Indeed, it is such news as would, hopefully, fetch me some badly needed support from the weighty ranks of the veterans and aficionados. Apart from my amateurish hesitation, there was another very specific reason for my not reporting this news earlier: Mr. Thomas (Dada) Gay of Poona, I was told, wished to report on the subject, and what with his long knowledge of birds in India, and his equally long experience in writing, I considered that it would be presumption on my part to write. However, he seems to have become involved in other things, while the news grows old, and is in some real danger of becoming rather a fact about the past, and Mr. Fatehally's plea for articles become more desperate. I give below, therefore, what I think is good news and hope that there will be reactions to it from readers, and, of course, more such articles from other amateurs who have the same reasons for hesitation.

The Central University of Hyderabad, Gacchi Bowli, Hyderabad 500 134, where I teach, has an extraordinary campus, and similarly extraordinary opportunity to create both a bird sanctuary and bird awareness. The campus is 2300 acres or 9 square kilometers in area, and covers such varied topographical features as hill, grassland, shrub, wood, pond, nullah, and marvellous great granite boulders both scattered and piled together. The terrain is semi-arid, and evinces much thorny vegetation. There is a considerable range of flora on the land as well as fauna including jackals, mongoose, hare, chipmunk, lizards, snakes and serpents which include python, cobra, russell's viper and krait; there are, of course, butterflies and moths and other insects of great variety.

Yet perhaps the most significant single fact both worth reporting and looking after is the bird life on the campus. When I first arrived a couple of years back, from my flat windows I saw many birds, and began to form estimates of the number of kinds of birds. My estimate had to be modified continually, perforce, and at the present moment I consider that including real and local migratory species, the campus has living in it and regularly passing through it upwards of 120 kinds of birds. The terrain being as varied as I reported earlier, there are mini-habitats or at least favourite grounds for different birds: the Golden Oriole can be seen in only two or three areas; the Plaintive Cuckoo hides in the more remote places; the Ioras move through the brush and the large pied wagtail sports both at the ponds and on and around campus buildings. The pied crested cuckoo visits every winter, and while during two winters I saw only the one pair, this winter I saw four birds; the pallid (pale) and marsh harrier are also winter visitors, and to my great joy and satisfaction, a pair of kestrel also visit here every winter. Parakeets and even grey shrikes appear to migrate locally, while the grey heron, various vultures and kites, and egrets and teal pass through. About ten peacocks reside there, and dozens of pairs/families of grey partridge and jungle bush quail. My list of confirmed species has, in fact, passed the 70 mark, and I have rarely had a chance yet to identify the really small birds which give human habitation a widish berth. All migration included, and when our ponds are not dry, as they are this unfortunate year, also wading and water birds included, the total number of species may well go beyond 150.

This I feel is worth reporting, because in the fast disappearing surface terrain--the city is 'growing', i.e., encroaching on the natural phenomena--in and around the rocky area specific to Hyderabad, this campus is already a rare place. Elsewhere crows, rock pigeons, mynahs and house sparrows exhaust the bird life.

There is another fact worth reporting--or should I be quite realistic and say not fact but possibility, because destruction, killing, trapping, netting, neglect and encroachment are all rife here. To anyone familiar with university campuses, it should be pretty clear what building and development requirements are expected. Some extraordinary centres of education are very well accommodated, of course, in as little as two or three dozen acres: e.g., the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research

in Bombay. But by and large, university campuses start off with more extensive land. Even then, most universities must count themselves fortunate to have as much as a few hundred acres of campus land. And, it is very clear that they need only a few hundred acres of land. As I have seen fully developed universities with hundreds of buildings in as little as 500 acres or so, and yet giving the impression of woodland and open spaces (for a specific instance, visit the University of Poona campus), I believe that the University of Hyderabad ought to be very adequately set up in a stretch of land about 700 or 800 acres in expanse. That is, there is an excellent and rare opportunity for this university to set up a conservation ground of about 1500 acres, whether specifically as a bird-sanctuary or as a non-specific general conservation ground, should not matter much. Presumably, this is a unique opportunity anywhere in the world, and therefore it is worth reporting.

I happen to have already made a detailed proposal to the university authorities for a conservation programme. And I hope that they will be enlightened enough to grant it, even if it means drawing in their horns somewhat. But I, and the university also, could do with suggestions and advice from those involved and experienced in conservation. I also need strong support for this proposal, from people who have far better credentials and knowledge.

If this conservation programme could be sanctioned, and judiciously conducted, not only will it create one more sanctuary, but it may also encourage other institutions and organizations who own large tracts of land to go in for such programmes. At the moment, despite the work of so many during the last few decades, awareness of the need to conserve is sadly lacking, and the Newsletter as well as its readers could help by writing to me with advice, and if there are any who are in positions of authority-- eg., in the Forestry and Environment departments, or those like Mr. Fatehally himself who have established personal credentials--they could also help by writing to the Vice Chancellor of this university in support of my proposal.

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Bird calls by Y.M. Rai: Birds may not have a language like human beings but they unmistakeably convey their message to their own kind and sometimes to those of other species too. Man has ever felt inspired at the songs of birds and the world literature is full of references to them. The thrushes, the robins, the shama are perhaps the best songsters among the birds of our country. How often have we felt thrilled at the song of the Indian robin, the magpie robin, the brown rock chat or the shama in the spring season as the breeding time approaches and it is time for love. The blue rock thrush lets fall a cascade of whistling song as it works its way up from branch to branch. Before the repertoire of these songsters the best of our compositions will pale into insignificance.

Sweet songsters may be few but sweetness of call is not uncommon and is met in birds in varying degree. Some minivets and flycatchers have calls that are like songs, sweet, liquid and unforgettable. The versatility of the black-headed myna is astounding, ranging from sweet warbling song to just chattering nonsense. The golden oriole and the hawk cuckoo charm us with their sweet calls. The tiny purple sunbird male and the small tailor bird are no less vociferous in rendering their simple, not unattractive calls. Indeed the recordings of bird calls does make a fascinating collection. At the same time a recording with colourful visual rendering of the background, particularly now when science has made it possible, is a treat to the eyes as well as ear and art at its best.

Man has seldom been successful in rendering bird calls faithfully into his own vocabulary. There are limitations and even the best renderings can not convey that sweetness though they have been good guides in field identification. I can not, therefore, dare make any new attempt except when necessary and will accept traditional rendering when I record my observations about their alarm calls, another aspect of their speech, as important and interesting as their songs. Excepting some, more or less, mute species like storks and egrets or less vocal ones like pigeons, doves or woodpeckers, most of the birds are capable of raising alarm at the sight of a nest robber or killer, be it a cat, mongoose, snake on the ground or a crow, treepie, a bird of prey above.

In a jungle the keen eye to detect an enemy and then raise alarm to warn all those who matter is best demonstrated by the scimitar babbler whose importance has been well



emphasised by many writers including Jim Corbett. If the scimitar babbler is absent, the job is as well done by other birds. I can not forget the strange melancholy cries of a flock of Necklaced laughing thrushes in the hills of the Corbett National Park and the reason was not difficult to trace on the lower branches of a forest tree, a big bird of prey. In another setting in Hastinapur forest, the wild orchestration was composed of the squeaks of the jungle babblers, the harsh calls of the common mynas, the raucous cry of the Treepie and above all a perfect mimicry of shikra's call by a black drongo. The cause of commotion was a shikra doing some exploration in a tall palm tree. In another instance in a forest rest house campus the alarm calls of sparrows, the jungle babblers, the common mynas and the agitated chatter of a grey headed flycatcher led me to witness a rat snake which at my approach took some time to drag its entire length into a hole.

The alarm calls of birds make an interesting study in itself and I will present my observations about some of them. Of all the birds, it is always the redvented bulbul that at the sight of a shikra or a sparrow hawk gives a sudden quick short call and all the birds dash to the safety of a hedge, shrub or dense branches of a tree. The bulbul's alarm then continues at an even pace as long as the bird of prey sits watching the area and then the alarm rises to a crescendo as the enemy is again on the wings. In spite of other birds, the bulbul, it seems, is the best scanner of the sky and always on the guard.

Another alarm call of the bulbul in short syllabeled, continuous spurt with a few pauses is uttered for crows, cats or treepies and the persistent urgency in it is unmistakable if the enemy chooses to stay rather than move. Very similar to it but lacking that urgency the bulbul has a third, mock alarm that it raises without any special reason before it goes to roost, a little before dusk. This last one doesn't attract other birds that have gone to roost, though it does attract the curiosity of the jungle babblers. Not even that bird of the dusky hours, the Magpie robin, gets alarmed by it.

The brown rockchat has also two different alarm calls. One is the high pitched short whistle, repeatedly given at the sight of a bird of prey. The effective area, the brown rockchat's high pitched call spans, is always wider than that of the bulbul. The other call of the brown rockchat is a harsh 'check' at low pitch raised at the sight of cats, mongoose etc. The bird follows the enemy

in movement and draingly dives at it. A bulbul or a myna does not make such passes. At the sight of snakes the bird hovers a few feet above the enemy from time to time, raising alarm at the same time.

The bulbul and the brown rockchat are then the two sentinels, most quick and reliable and at times almost simultaneous, and first callers in case of an approaching bird of prey. The mynas may join later with their harsh cries while the crows will fly cawing around the tree where the bird of prey is and the sparrows, after a silent dash in the hedge, start urgently chirping their alarm.

The mynas are the best scanners of the ground and take the lead in raising alarm at a lurking cat, crawling snake or other enemies seldom missed by them. It is in most cases the common myna with loud harsh grating call of alarm, but no rules can be made about it for it depends on the chance presence of a particular kind at the scene of action. The bank and the blackheaded mynas are rather less loud, only in degree, and less vocal too as they join others when they must as also the pied myna with a very harsh alarm call. Once a pied myna which had just finished its bath almost escaped interception by a shikra while it dashed to the safety of a pomegranate shrub, sat there with its breast against a thick upright branch, head held back and beak raised up, much like a camouflaging bittern, uttering frightened harsh shrieks, the alarming note highly magnified, which unmistakably conveyed the terror of the dreaded shikra.

In wild place where grasses and weeds are thick, the unseen enemy is indicated by the alarm of the wren warblers or the tailor bird. The ashy wren warbler gives a long drawn 'pheen' alarm and the tailor bird, a continuous 'pit pit pit'. The bulbuls, the babblers and the mynas may join them later. During breeding season, the alarm calls of birds are frequently heard, for then the birds are more sensitive and tense and quick to detect danger. Indeed, the redwattled lapwing seldom sleeps at night in breeding season and from time to time utters a loud, piercing 'did' at intervals while on the ground but once on wings it loudly questions 'did he' or its usual 'did he do it'. The lapwing and the sarus crane often spoil game hunting by giving warning calls to ducks and geese as the shikaris approach a wetland.

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Some notes on the birds of Mithapur by Graham Madge:

Introduction: I visited Mithapur as a guest of Tata Chemicals from 10 to 15 February 1985, which gave me four full days to look over the bird life of the area. I was made most comfortable and given every facility to travel round the extensive salt pans. As someone who has been deeply involved with bird protection over many years was most encouraging for me to learn of the interest the General Manager, Mr.M.K.Vadgama and his firm are showing in the bird life of the area they administer, and to note their concern for environmental protection in general. It is an example which I hope will be noted and copied by other large industrial concerns which have land areas used by birds and other wildlife. Mr.Rajan, the company's surveyor, gave me a great deal of help in showing me around the complicated network of salt pans which he knows so well, and an employee of the company, Satish Trevedi, who has, with Mr.Vadgama's encouragement, been keeping some records of the major species occurring there, accompanied me on some of my visits and gave me the benefit of the considerable knowledge he has acquired about the birds of Mithapur.

It is clear that the development of the salt works has created an important habitat for wetland birds and is being used by a great variety of species as a wintering area. I feel that it must also be important as a staging post for migrant water birds moving along the coast, particularly as it is near the headland at Okha which is situated on the seaward extremity on the southern side of the Gulf of Kutch. It seems likely that birds moving north on migration would take off at that point to cross the mouth of the Gulf before moving on northwards, and a feeding area where they can 'stoke up' before travelling on must be useful, especially as so many marshes and wet lands have been drained and converted to agricultural use all round the world.

It would be impossible during a brief visit to make anything like an adequate survey of the birds occurring at Mithapur, and the following notes are based on impressions formed as I travelled round the area, making rough counts whenever possible. Some of my speculations may prove to be incorrect and it would require a considerable period of study and recording to make an adequate assessment of birds using the area. Never-the-less, I hope my observations will be of some value and will help to further interest in the birds at Mithapur.



I should like to record how very much I enjoyed my visit and how much I appreciated all the help I was given. I felt very privileged to be the recipient of such generous hospitality and to have access to an area so rich in bird life. It was a valuable experience for me and a very important part of my visit to India, which was made with the purpose of seeing the wintering birds of Gujarat. My grateful thanks to all concerned.

Species notes - birds mainly associated with the salt pans:  
White(Rosy) Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*.  
Charakla - a flock of about 300 resting along a bund and about 150 others in that area.

DALMATIAN PELICAN *Pelecanus crispus*.  
About 30 with the white pelicans at Charakla and ones and twos seen elsewhere - 5 at Arambhada. Less gregarious than white and birds met singly or in very small numbers were all Dalmatians, here and elsewhere in Gujarat.

LARGE CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*  
Two at Charakla

LITTLE CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax niger*  
Seen frequently all over the area with c.50 at Charakla and 35 at Arambhada 40 at Sagar.

DARTER *Aninga ruta*. Single birds seen frequently.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*  
Spread out along watersides all over the area. Estimated 50 at Charakla.

LITTLE GREEN HERON. *Butorides striatus*  
One at dusk in bushes by Sagar-Intake.

POND HERON *Ardeola greyii*  
This is a bird of murky, freshwater ponds but 3 were seen at Charakla.

LARGE EGRET *Egretta alba*.  
Widespread around saltpans and also on the coast at Poshitra.

SMALLER EGRET *Egretta intermedia*  
About 20 at Charakla and small numbers elsewhere.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*  
Small numbers mixed in with other egrets on salt pans and at Poshitra



REEF HERON *Egretta gularis*  
Met with frequently around saltpans. Estimated 60 at Charakla.

PAINTED STORK *Ibis leucocephalus*  
Estimated three to four hundred at Charakla with over 200 in one flock. Also a few at Poshitra.

BLACK-NECKED STORK *Xenorhynchus asiaticus*  
Four at Charakla and two on a sandy islet off Poshitra.

WHITE IBIS *Theskiornis melanocephala*  
Only seen occasionally in ones or twos.

GREATER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus roseus*  
Spread out over many of the saltpans with about 300 feeding on the Sagar Intake and many more at Charakla and smaller numbers at Arambhada. Estimated total between 1,500 and 2,000 birds. This included a few immatures which must have flown from the breeding grounds in the Rann of Kutch. (Satish Trivedi counted over 700 on 26.11.84. So numbers have increased).

LESSER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus minor*  
Not so numerous. About 40 at Charakla with smaller numbers at Arambhada and Sagar.

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*  
About 150 at Charakla

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*  
This duck which is common in Gujarat in winter is more a freshwater bird, but there were about 150 at Arambhada and smaller numbers at Charakla and Sagar.

SHOVELLER *Anas clypeata*  
Six at Arambhada and a few (under 20) at Charakla. This too is a freshwater duck not usually found on seawater.

SPOTBILL DUCK *Anas poecilorhyncha*  
Two at Arambhada were the only ones seen.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*  
Two hunting over saltpans at Charakla and another at Sagar.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*  
The shallow waters must provide ideal hunting conditions for this species. There was one at Sagar, two seen at Charakla and two at Arambhada. Probably more occur during migrations.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*  
More a coastal bird. Seen at Poshitra but also two at Sagar.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*.  
Present in very small numbers at Sagar, Charakla, Arambhada

LARGE SAND PLOVER *Charadrius leschenaultii*  
A few at Sagar were thought to be this species as they were beginning to show the chestnut coloured breast band of breeding plumage, but confusion with Lesser sandplover *C. mongolus* possible unless both are seen together.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*  
A few at Sagar and Arambhada

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*  
A flock of about 400 at Sagar. Also seen at Poshitra.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*  
Two at Charakla

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*  
Small numbers at Sagar, Charakla, Poshitra

BLACK TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*  
Frequently met with but not numerous. About 25 at Charakla

COMMON REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*  
Thinly scattered over much of the area. Perhaps one to two hundred birds altogether.

MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*  
Present at Sagar, Charakla and Arambhada in very small numbers.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*  
Six at Charakla

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*  
Met with occasionally but not common. 5 at Charakla

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*  
Another mainly coastal species but 9 were seen at Sagar and a few at Arambhada.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minutus*  
Widespread and fairly common. About 30 at Charakla

TEMMINCK'S STINT *Calidris temminckii*  
One at Sagar

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*  
15 at Charakla; a few at Sagar

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Calidris testaceus*  
Odd birds seen at Sagar and Arambhada

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*  
Three at Charakla and 16 at Arambhada. One with white head and neck was seen at Sagar and this seemed like partial albinism rather than a bird coming into breeding plumage (14 Feb.) Nitin Jamdar tells me that similar birds have been recorded elsewhere.

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*. Small numbers  
Sagar, Charakla, Arambhada.

LESSER BLACKBACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*  
About 140 at Sagar.

GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ichthyetus*  
Eight at Charakla. This large and handsome gull is very rare in Europe and I had never seen it before visiting Gujarat where I first saw some at Nalsarover.

BROWN-HEADED GULL *Larus brunnicephalus*  
A few at Sagar and Charakla. Larger numbers at Okha

SLENDER-BILLED GULL *Larus genei*  
Considerable numbers at Charakla - over 250 feeding at one outlet and four to five hundred altogether; also a few at Sagar.

WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybrida*  
Present in small numbers

GULL-BILLED TERN. *Gelochelidon nilotica*  
Common - seen frequently in all areas

CASPIAN TERN *Hydroprogene caspia*  
This large and handsome tern was also common and may have been more numerous than the Gull-billed.

LESSER CRESTED TERN *Sterna bengalensis*  
A flock of about 30 was at the Sagar Intake, late p.m. 14 Feb.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*. Six at Charakla

LESSER PIED KINGFISHER *Ceryle rudis*  
One's and twos seen at several pints around saltpans

COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*  
Seen at Sagar and two at Charakla

WHITE-BREASTED KINGFISHER *Halcyon smyrnensis*  
Odd birds seen by saltpans, also in Guest house gardens

BLACK CAPPED KINGFISHER. *Halcyon pileata*  
One at Sagar, 13 Feb.

#### NOTES ON SELECTED SPECIES SEEN IN SURROUNDING AREAS

BLACK IBIS *Pseuibis papillosa*  
Four seen in field by road to Poshitra.

LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo rufinus*  
Two on coast by Sagar Intake pumphouse. These birds allowed close approach which was a great thrill for me as it is a species I had not seen before.

WHITE-EYED BUZZARD *Butastur teesa*. One, enroute to Poshitra.

PALE HARRIER *Circus macrourus*  
Seen several times at various places in the area so several birds present. One was hunting along the bunds at Charakla.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*  
Two or three in the area and others farther south. Of some 15 sightings of this and the previous species in West Gujarat all but two were males, so it seems that the females may winter mainly in a different area.

SHORT-TOED EAGLE *Cicetus gallicus*  
One seen near road after leaving south and of Charakla on 12 Feb. and again, in same place, on 15 Feb. It seems likely that there is a pair in that area and as they are tree nesters they may well breed there.

BOOTED EAGLE *Hieraaetus pennatus*  
One seen soaring over Mithapur, 13 February

KESTREL *FALCO tinnunculus*  
Four seen along road to Okha and seen occasionally elsewhere, so fairly common in the area.



COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

Seventeen feeding in fields by road to Poshitra (4+3+10)

DEMOISELLE CRANE *Anthropoides virgo*

Four with common cranes by road to Poshitra where the only ones seen.

CRAB PLOVER *Dromas ardeola*

Two at Poshitra were the only ones I saw during my visit to Gujarat.

GREAT STONE PLOVER *Esacus magnirostris*

Satish Trivedi had seen this bird on the coastal side of the Sagar Intake, and I was delighted to see two pairs when he took me there.

INDIAN COURSER *Cursorius coromandelicus*

Two by a track near Mithapur and five more on the air-landing strip - my only sightings of this handsome bird in Gujarat

SANDLARK *Calendrella raytal*

Seen near coast at Mithapur

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calendrella cinerea*

Common in the area with several hundred on rough ground and dry fields round Charakla. This must be one of the most numerous wintering birds in Gujarat as flocks of them were met with on dry ground almost wherever I went.

SYKE'S CRESTED LARK *Galerida deva*

A small party of about 15 on the stony slopes near the little temple, north end of Charakla.

SMALL SKYLARK *Alauda gulgula*

Found at Arambhada and Sagar

(N.B. Larks are notoriously difficult to identify and it takes time to get to know them in a new area, but I believe the above to have been correctly identified. The crested lark *Galerida cristata* was also seen, so it is a good area for this family.

GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Seen at Charakla. Not common in the area.

PALE BROWN SHRIKE *Lanius isabellinus*

Seen en route to Poshitra. Does not seem to be common in Gujarat?

GREY-HEADED MYNA *Sturnus malabaricus*

20-30 feeding with Brahminy mynas and rosy starlings on small green fruits of tree in Guest House garden, early morning 12 and 13 Feb. Also about 45 seen perched in tree by guest house late one afternoon. This is perhaps a new record for Saurashtra and northern most on the west coast.

REDVENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus cafer*

One on several occasions fluttered against the diningroom window, obviously attacking its own reflection. (A magpie robin *Copsychus saularis* was later seen very persistently attacking its reflection in a coach window at air until it fluttered to the ground exhausted. Other species, particularly white wagtail *Motacilla alba* are known to do this and it is unfortunate for the birds as they are unable to recognise the reflection as anything other than a rival which cannot be driven away).

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

One in guest house garden, early morning, 14 Feb.

DESERT WHEATEAR. *Oenanthe deserti*

Seen in several places in the area including by the Sagar Intake.

In addition to the above many of the common birds of Gujarat were seen, including pariah kite, Brahminy kite, shikra, grey partridge, India ring dove, little brown dove, rose-ringed parakeet, little swift, green bee-eater, Indian roller, hoopoe, common swallow, wire-tailed swallow, rufous-backed shrike, black drongo, common myna, house crow, jungle crow, red-wattled lapwing, ashy-crowned finchlark, white-eared bulbul, India robin, stonechat, large grey babbler, common babbler, tailor bird, tawny pipit, white wagtail, purple sunbirds and, inevitably, house sparrow.

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Searching for the spotted creeper by R.Kannan: I started an intensive hunt for the little known spotted creeper in the forests of Bharatpur almost since the day I joined the BNHS Research Centre, in December 1983.

At 4.45 PM on the 12 November 1984, the great sighting which I had been so earnestly trying for eleven long months, came at last. Walking along one of the Acacia

lined dykes that intersect the marshes, I flushed a tiny bird from atop a dead stump. The moment I saw the peculiar dipping flight and the slender bill in the silhouette, I was certain that I had 'my bird' at last. Exhilarated, I followed the flying bird with my binoculars till it alighted on top of a Prosopis spicigera tree standing on the marsh, I got excellent views as the diminutive bird, smaller than a sparrow, worked its way about the boughs, spiralling about the twigs and branches in a manner reminiscent of the Nuthatch. The white supercilium, the profusely spotted back, the fine slender and downcurved bill and the stumpy tail with black subterminal bands were all clearly noticed.

Since the bird was very parochial, I kept seeing it on and off in more or less the same area till the 6th January 1985. Within this period, I saw spotted creepers obviously different birds, in two more areas of the reserve: at Sapan Mori and also near the boating area behind the rest house. All the birds I saw were solitary. Details of these encounters were recorded in my field note book.

The spotted creeper is one of the strangest birds I have ever seen. I would not call it a very shy one as I have at times observed it within a distance of 20 feet or so. The bird can mostly be seen in areas abounding with furrow laden trees such as Acacia, Zizyphus and Prosopis, where it can feast on the grubs that dwell beneath the plethora of crevices on the bark. The bird keeps dextrously introducing its super fine bill into the fissures and cracks on the wood, usually with a characteristic twist of the head. On pulling out a morsel, it gobbles it up by lifting bill and pointing it skywards. It then wipes the bill by slashing it this and that against the boughs, before creeping about in quest for more food.

A person well versed at the calls of the creeper should stand better chances of locating it, as it is an inconspicuous bird to be readily located by sight. The call is a series of thin high-pitched but musical notes, something like 'swee-chiu-chiu-chiu....' etc., of the quality of a sunbirds', started quite boldly, but fading away progressively into silence.

In Bharatpur, the creeper shares its foraging habitat with the common bark-loving birds like the chestnut bellied nuthatch, Olivaceous leaf warbler and the Mahratta



woodpecker. The Bird has the habit of flying from tree to tree, right along the dyke, when gently pursued. But when taken by surprise, it flies away right across the vast marshes to some tree standing in the distance, thereby displaying its good power of flight. Thus one may even look for these birds while boating around the heronry trees!

The status of the bird at Bharatpur is doubtlessly rare. Of the thousands of land birds ringed by the BNHS at Bharatpur over the years, just three have been spotted creepers. Two of the most keen and regular visitors to Bharatpur, Miss Elizabeth Forster and Mr. Ben king, have never seen the bird here. During all my 18 months of active birding at the ghana, I estimate that I must have seen 4 or 5 birds at the most. Incidentally, in summer 1982, Dr. V.S. Vijayan (pers.comm.) photographically recorded a pair nesting in the sanctuary.

Based on my limited experience, I advise anyone in quest of the creeper at Bharatpur, to walk silently along the Acacia planted bunda or dykes, or along the rows of trees bordering the forest roads, and hope to flush the bird from the trunks. It may not be necessary to criss-cross the jungles, as all my forays that way have been in vain. (Curiously enough, I have been spotting these birds only upon trees that have been planted in a row, and not on such trees that stand haphazardly here and there).

A great deal of patience and skill is required to see a bird as small and rare as the spotted creeper, and it needs a lot of luck too.

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Garden Birds at Mallikassery by I.K. Abraham: Mallikassery is in Kottayam district in central Kerala, about 40 km away from the district headquarters at Kottayam. It is a small village in the heart of the rubber growing area. Interspersed with the extensive rubber plantations are small areas interplanted with coconut, cocoa, coffee, arecanut, jackfruit, mango, nutmeg, clove, mahogani, teak, and other trees. The following is a list of the birds seen in and around the immediate vicinity of the house where I live. The house is surrounded by a largish area devoted to what may loosely be termed a garden, being in fact a rather haphazard collection of trees



and shrubs, mostly flowering, ranging from lantana bushes to sapota and Singapore Cherry trees, with a number of bougainvillea standing out. All these birds were seen and identified while sitting comfortably on the verandah of the house with binoculars and a note-book and pencil, sometimes in the morning, but more often in the early afternoon and evening. No major effort in the field was involved in their sighting and identification. However, they are not all equally common. Some are assured daily visitors. Others certainly seen at least once every two days or so. Their abundance varies with the changing seasons too, but all may be seen at the time of writing. They are all visitors to the garden.

1. Common crow - *Corvus splendens protegatus*
2. Jungle crow - *Corvus macrorhynchos*
3. Tree pie - *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
4. Common myna - *Acridotheres tristis*
5. Jungle myna - *Acridotheres fuscus*
6. Blossomheaded parakeet - *Psittacula cyanocephala*
7. Nilgiri Flowerpecker - *Dicaeum concolor*
8. Tickel's flowerpecker - *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
9. Purple sunbird - *Nectarinia asiatica*
10. Purple-rumped sunbird - *Nectarinia zeylonica*
11. Iora - *Aegithinia tiphia*
12. Malabar goldenbacked woodpecker - *Dinopium benghalense*
13. Malabar jungle owlet - *Glaucidium radiatum malabaricum*
15. Black drongo - *Dicrurus adsimilis*
16. Greater rackettailed drongo - *Dicrurus paradiseus*
17. Paddy bird - *Ardea grayii*
18. Blackheaded cuckoo-shrike - *Coracina malanoptera*
19. Whitebacked munia - *Lonchura striata*
19. Redwhiskered bulbul - *Pycnonotus jocosus*
20. Redvented bulbul - *Pycnonotus cafer*
21. Yellowbrowed bulbul - *Hypsipetes indicus*
22. Koel - *Eudynamys scolopacea*
23. Greyheaded myna - *Sturnus malabaricus*
24. Tickel's blue flycatcher - *Muscicapa tickelliae*
25. Brownbreasted flycatcher - *Muscicapa muttui*
26. Paradise flycatcher - *Terpsiphone paradisi*
27. Golden oriole - *Oriolus oriolus*
28. Blackheaded oriole - *Oriolus zanthornus*
29. Goldmantled chloropsis - *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*
30. Goldfronted chloropsis - *Chloropsis aurifrons*
31. Small green barbet - *Megalaima viridis*
32. Grey tit - *Parus major*
33. Small minivet - *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*
34. Magpie robin - *Copsychos saularis*
35. Ashy swallow-shrike - *Artamus fuscus*
36. Crow-pheasant - *Gentropus sinensis*
37. Tailor bird - *Orthotomus suetorius*

In addition to these birds, the following additional species have been recorded within a five minute walk from the house, in the paddy fields or in the rubber estates or other appropriate habitat.

1. The Malabar pigmy woodpecker - *Dendrocopos nanos*
2. Cattle egret - *Bubulcus ibis*
3. Little egret - *Egretta garzetta*
4. Black bittern - *Ixobrychos flavicollis*
5. Whitethroated ground thrush - *Zosterops citrina cyanotus*
6. Heartspotted woodpecker - *Hemicircus canente*
7. Mahratta woodpecker - *Picoides mahrattensis*
8. Blue jay - *Coracias benghalensis*
9. Whitebreasted kingfisher - *Halcyon smyrnensis*
10. Small blue kingfisher - *Alcedo atthis*
11. Roseringed parakeet - *Psittacula krameri*

Over the past 6 years or so, we have discouraged any kind of shooting in the area of about 30 acres near the house. There has been a noticeable increase in the number and varieties of birds. Furthermore, they have become quite confiding. The bird bath in the garden, barely ten yards off the verandah, and the Singapore cherry tree under it stands, are both regularly visited by almost every bird in the first list above.

On a few occasions we have had visits by largish kites and other raptors, none of which could be identified. But on every occasion, the birds were harassed by the local crows and after a couple of casual visits, were not seen again. Raptors are still sighted off and on in varying sizes and shapes, but never long enough for an identification.

The rubber plantations have not been an unmixed blessing for the birds. These plantations provide excellent feeding areas for a wide variety of birds and also daytime roosts for species such as the jungle owlet (*Glaucidium radiatum*). But I have yet to see a bird nesting in a rubber tree. If the few remaining areas of mixed plantations and old large trees are cleared for rubber, it could have a deleterious effect on the local bird population. But, as yet, there is no threat of such a thing happening in the foreseeable future.

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### Correspondence

The common swallows in Tiruchirapalli by Daniel Wesley:  
Wild Life Conservation Society, C/o. Hotel Sangam, Tiruchira-  
palli-620 001: Swallows are very commonly seen over the  
standing paddies, water bodies or the fields being ploughed,  
the bird concentrating around the plougher, man or machine.

At 3.10 PM on 29 October 1983, a swallow, unable to  
weather the wind-swept rain, found it safe to alight on the  
grill-door of my house. It was caught, examined and let  
off. A little bigger than the sparrow, it was steel-blue  
above with chestnut on the fore-head, chin and throat. The  
breast band was blue-black and broken in the middle by  
the extension of the chestnut of the throat. The rest of  
the undersurface up to the undertail coverts was white;  
the undertail coverts had a tinge of brown. There was a  
white spot on each of the five rectrices on either side of  
the two central ones. The contour feathers of the breast  
and abdomen were proximally black and distally white,  
covering the pinkish skin.

The iris was dark brown; the bill, legs including the  
feet were black. The nictitating membrane flicked over  
the cornea from above it.

The measurements of the wing, bill and rectrices  
suggested the bird to be a female; the size and pattern  
of the white spots on the tail were indicative of a  
subadult.

### MEASUREMENTS

Overall length	Wing	Bill	Tarsus	Tail	
				Central	outer
145 mm	117	11	9	40	77

• Counts of the swallow sitting on the electric and  
telephone wires over the paddy fields, waters and resi-  
dential colony have shown that the sub-species forms a  
small group of about 30% of the swallows that visit this  
area of about 50 acres. This year (1986) the migrant  
swallows to this area seem to be quite meagre as compared  
to the same period of yester-years.

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Redbilled Tropic bird at Kaup by Dr.N.A.Madhyastha, Reader in Zoology, Poornaprajna College, Udupi 576101: On July first, a school going boy spotted an unusual bird floating on the surface of sea water near Kaup, D.K. and it was brought to the department of Zoology of Poornaprajna College, Udupi. The bird is identified as a redbilled tropic bird, Phaethon aethereus, a bird of northern part of Indian ocean. Records show that similar birds were spotted on the coast of Srilanka in 1956 and in 1972. A few were also recorded from the coastal waters of Karachi, Bombay and Laccadive Islands. The one which is found at Kaup is perhaps the first report for Karnataka coast.

The name Phaethon, is after the son of Helios, the sun God, who, in Greek mythology, drove his father's fiery sun chariot across the skies. This name to the bird, apparently is an allusion to the sunny tropical home of these birds.

The tropic birds are familiar to sailors. They call them 'bosun' bird, for the two tail feathers of these birds resemble marlinespike of boatswain.

The bosun is an elegant white bird with black small strips on the body. Its coral red beak is characteristic. The legs are short and placed far back and hence the bird cannot walk on ground but has to crawl on its belly. It feeds on fish and squids and breeds on cliffs of oceanic islands.

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Flamingoes in Badami Taluk by Dr.J.C.Uttangi,56/1, Mission Compound, Dharwad 580001: I read with interest the article on 'Flamingoes in Badami Taluk' etc., by S.Ranga-swami Gopala, on page 20 of your recent 1986 July-August issue of NLBW Vol.XXVI No.7 and 8. It is indeed curious to find migrating pintails to congregate in Kandoor-Kore near Badami so early in the month of August (23rd Aug.'82). Ecologically the niche association of Pintails with Lesser Flamingoes is worth noting. Pintails (*Anas acuta*) are ducks which breed during May and July in the Palearctic region and take time to reach their foraging brackish-water habitats in the south. The customary arrivals of these birds in our areas of Dharwad district is early winter months of October and November. It is of utmost importance in field-ornithology that recording of details if not all, at least one or two most important diagnostic characteristics



of the species including, size, approximate number, winter coat etc., is necessary and should be made on the spot. This will not only serve as useful information to the Body of waterfowl census but also will help in the correct identification of the species.

The occurrence of 14 Lesser flamingoes (*Phoeniconaias minor*) in the shallow waters of Kandoor Kere about 10 kilometers from the historic place Badami in Karnataka on 23rd, Aug. 1982 is interesting too from the viewpoint of temporary migratory invasions of areas. It may be recalled here that although 1982-83 season was considered a peak year for the greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) across Pune (Maharashtra), no members of this species were found near Badami (Karnataka). However, at Bhigwan village point about 92 kilometers from Pune in the backwaters of Ujani dam along Pune-Sholapur highway, hundreds of greater flamingo were seen during 1982-83 by Dr.E.Barucha (sanctuary Asia vol.VI, No.2, 1986). In contrast to this, the occurrence of only a single individual of lesser flamingo was recorded by Taej Mundkar, 8 kilometers West of Pune in Pashan lake on the 29th June and 17th July, 1982, (BNHS, Jr.Vol.81, Aug.1984). Justifiably therefore, the distribution and patterns of local movements of migrating water fowls including storks, spoonbills, flamingoes, teals and ducks etc., need a concomitant survey and study at National level. The patterns of flamingo movements on the whole certainly are irregular and wherever they occur their feeding habitats or wetlands of all denominations, big or small should be protected from degradation and shrinking, through a process of rehabilitation. Compared to lesser flamingo the greater flamingo has a wide range of distribution but these birds are extremely unsteady in their movements.

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A Frogmouth again by Ranjit R.J.Daniels, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Sirsi 581402: It was a rainy day (10.10.84) when my colleague and I were finding our way through the thick under-growth looking for birds. It had rained heavily just a while ago and the whole forest was dripping. Absolutely nothing seemed to be around and we started blaming the rain as we walked up. But suddenly, something flew out of a small cane thicket a few yards away. I guessed it was a frogmouth and to my surprise, it was the Ceylon frogmouth (*Batrachostomus moniliger*). I was even more surprised to realise that I had seen the bird in the same forest, about the same place (Kumta, N.Kanara)

exactly a year back (7.10.88). It could have been just a coincidence. Still I am tempted to say that rainy days may cause the bird to move about. I have never seen the bird inbetween though I have often been there during the different seasons.

It settled quite close to us on a horizontal branch about six foot above the ground. It was a female. We went nearer and stood hardly an arm's reach away from it. Unfortunately, we had no camera. It sat there and was staring at us. Then I put out my hand and wriggled one of my fingers like a worm. It did respond in an interesting way demonstrating its temper. With its head feathers puffed up, the bird opened its big mouth angrily which made it look like a snake about to strike. We left it at that and after an hour when we came to the same place, the frog-mouth was gone.

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Capturing birds by fish hooks by Milind Desai: With barely thirty huts and no post office, police station or for that matter, not a road even, I don't think you can call it a village, but well that is 'Asoki' about 2 kms from Tadri and to reach this place, you will inevitably have to cross a whole lot of variegated landforms. Tadri is about 4 kms from Gokarn in the Karwar district of coastal Karnataka.

It was here that I was told of this trick for catching birds, particularly pond herons. The method is tried in the open paddy fields and just after rains when there is a boom in the dragonfly population. The method is reportedly very efficient.

It started when a Malabar whistling thrush (*Myiophoneus horsfieldii horsfieldii*) acted in a strange manner, rising to about 2 feet above the ground flapping its wings, falling back on the ground, and repeating the process over and over again.

I requested my guide (Mahabaleshwar was his name) to look into what was happening and he brought the bird to me along with the whole contraption that had lured the poor bird into sure death.

Things were explained and I looked at the construction of the trap. One end of a fishing line, about two and a half metres long is tied to a rod, usually of iron or any other heavy object and a hook is tied to the other end,

similar to the one used in fishing. To this hook, a live dragonfly is impaled through its abdomen and the trap is ready. The dragonfly does not die immediately but tries to fly away, lifting with it the lighthook and the line. Now the bird swallows the insect right into its stomach where the hook gets firmly embedded.

Now, I held the miserable little thing in my hand and pulled its mouth open, but the hook had gone deep inside and I could not even see it. My guide, then tried to pull out the line, drawing blood from the bird's mouth, and I could not bear the sight. I got this idea of bringing a quickend to its agony by killing it but could not bring myself to harm a single feather on the poor little creature. I just walked away from the place and let me be frank - I felt tears on my cheeks ... something that had never happened so far on a bird watching trip. I even mumbled some incoherent words at the mob which had gathered there by now. I even met the brave little chap who had set up the trap. But I was as helpless as the bird itself, for the people have been doing this for ages.

Later on, my companion told me that he had cut the line at its bill, thus leaving the hook within the bird's body. The incident however left me badly shaken and even now, twenty days after the occurrence, I can almost see the terrified little bird and the incisive hook.

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## मध्यप्रदेश में सिंचाई सुविधाओं का विस्तार

सातवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना की अवधि में प्रदेश शासन द्वारा निर्माणाधीन सिंचाई योजनाओं को पूरा करने पर विशेष बल।

सिंचाई क्षमता में वृद्धि के लिए आगामी पांच वर्षों में नौ बहु-उद्देशीय परियोजनाएँ, सत्रह बड़ी योजनाएँ, चबालिस मध्यम योजनाएँ और एक हजार छ सौ छहत्तर छोटी सिंचाई योजनाओं पर काम करने का निर्णय। अगले पांच वर्षों में प्रदेश की सिंचाई क्षमता में सात लाख तीस हजार हेक्टेयर वृद्धि का लक्ष्य।

निर्मित सिंचाई क्षमता के पूरे उपयोग के लिये सिंचाई योजनाओं के कमाण्ड क्षेत्र में सिंचाई नालियों और जल निकास नालियों के निर्माण की योजना।

सिंचाई का सही उपयोग कर उत्पादन बढ़ाने का प्रशिक्षण देने के लिए भोपाल में जल एवं भू-प्रबन्ध संस्थान की स्थापना।

प्रदेश में कुओं द्वारा सिंचाई को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए हरिजनों आदिवासियों और दो हेक्टेयर तक के खातेदार छोटे किसानों के लिए सिंचाई कुआ बीमा योजना शुरू करने का निर्णय। इस योजना के तहत ऐसे किसानों को लागत वापस मिल सकेगी जिनके कुएँ असफल हो जाते हैं।

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किसानों की खुशहली के लिए कटिबद्ध सरकार।  
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## प्रवेश में खेल और युवक कल्याण के बढ़ते कदम

प्रदेश के 100 उत्कृष्ट खिलाड़ियों को ₹0 900 के मान से वार्षिक वृत्ति.

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खेल और खिलाड़ियों के चहुँमुखी विकास के लिए सकल्पित सरकार

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